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LACANIAN GAZE, SEMIOTICS, AND THE ENIGMA OF BOSCH

By

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B.A., University of Louisville, 1987
M.A.T., University of Louisville, 1996

A Dissertation
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A Dissertation Approved on

April 3, 2017

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DEDICATION

To my sister Jennifer, the amazing math teacher
and my Father John a fisherman, professor, and scholar. I couldn't of
done this with out my crack support and editing team;
really!

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ABSTRACT

LACANIAN GAZE, SEMIOTICS, AND THE ENIGMA OF BOSCH

Virginia Hosono

April 3, 2017

Hieronymus Bosch's (1450-1516) paintings have long fascinated, intrigued, and mystified viewers. In particular, the *Garden of Earthly Delights* (c.1500) has generated much discussion and speculation. Bosch's use of medieval symbols and fantastic images, his preoccupation with sinfulness and Hell, and his dismal view of mankind's future have long been sources of study and speculation. Not only do art historians ponder his work, but so do social historians, philosophers, creative artists and the general viewing public. There is no definitive interpretation of Bosch's *Garden* that explains the power the painting holds over its viewers. By examining various interpretations of Bosch's works, coupled with a decipherment of the *Garden* using the Lacan's theory of the Gaze and semiotics, the author argues that it is not possible for there to be a single, authoritative interpretation of the work. This dissertation shows that semiotics opens new avenues of investigation and interpretation; one where signs have multiple meanings and anxiety in the viewer can ensue.

Consisting of two distinct yet interconnected parts: one written, one visual/creative. This dissertation allows for interaction with the painting in two languages. The written part explores how the Gaze draws the viewer into the

narrative and discusses how, through semiotics, the creation of meaning is developed on different semiotic levels. The visual/creative section examines the intersections of ekphrasis, semiotics, and clay sculpture through the lens of Hieronymus Bosch's work. Specifically, this creative portion the lack of ekphrastic interpretations of Bosch's work in clay sculpture.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Hieronymus Bosch's (1450-1516) paintings have long fascinated, intrigued, and mystified viewers. In particular, the *Garden of Earthly Delights* (c.1500)¹ has generated much discussion and speculation. Bosch's use of medieval symbols and fantastic images, his preoccupation with sinfulness and Hell, and his dismal view of mankind's future have long been sources of study and speculation. Not only do art historians ponder his work, but so do social historians, philosophers, creative artists, and the general viewing public. All have argued over the panels teeming with strange visions, devils, mythological beasts, peculiar plants, imaginary animals and birds, mixed in with naked people. The first panel presents Jesus with Adam and Eve, the second teeming with naked people leads to the third with Bosch's vision of Hell. Each viewer champions their own explanatory theory and asserts it as the key to understanding all the embedded symbols and the artist's now hidden message.

Analyses of Bosch's *Garden* run the gamut from the sublime to the bizarre. Some theorists ascribe symbolic meaning to its images, attempting to read various elements in the composition as representing hidden realities (Moxey "Semiotics and the Social History of Art." 994). Joseph Koerner, professor of Art History at Harvard, called Bosch "the inventor of invention, the fantasist of fantasies, the producer of singularities that he singularly produced" (87). Others see Bosch as a fifteenth-century Surrealist who dredged up disturbing forms from the unconscious mind. Yet others believe that Bosch's

art reflects esoteric practices of the late Middle Ages, such as alchemy, astrology or witchcraft. Some claim that Bosch was a member of the heretical sect called the Brethren of the Free Spirit, a religious sect whose members lived communally, and practiced social and religious nudity, free love, and rejected marriage. Those who subscribe to this particular theory interpret the central panel of the *Garden* as depicting the activities of an Adamite cult within this movement.² Wilhelm Fraenger (1890-1964) advanced this theory as the way to unravel the meaning of Bosch's painting, but today few subscribe to it as the key to understanding Bosch.

None of these theories completely captures the underlying complexities occurring in the painting nor explain the long-standing hold the painting has had on all viewers. Art Historian Erwin Panofsky believes that the secret to interpreting Bosch's unusual imagery in the *Garden* has yet to be found. He states, "[W]e have bored a few holes in the door of the locked room, but somehow we do not seem to have discovered the key" (Panofsky 357).

Although the author agrees with Panofsky's statement, the purpose of this dissertation is not to expand upon all the interpretations or assign one correct over another, nor is it designed to present a new overarching theory. It is to explain how the Lacanian Gaze³ draws the viewer into the work, and how semiotics⁴ uses isolated images within the work to merge and create new combinations of meaning for the viewer. Further, the combination of the Gaze and semiotics shows how these meanings can be expressed in a medium other than words.

Thus, this creative dissertation consists of two distinct yet interconnected parts: one theoretical and written, one artistically visual and creative.

The process begins with the painting. Lacan's Gaze focuses the viewer's attention on isolated images or clusters of images in different panels. The effect of these images is the creation of feelings and emotions that cannot be expressed adequately through words. However, through the process of personal response⁵ or ekphrasis⁶ the author can express them through clay sculptures. These works of art then become signs for the viewers revealing aspects of the painting that may not be readily accessible. The thread that sews these two elements together is the multidisciplinary field of semiotics.

Contemporary semiotics is concerned with the creation of meaning through images. By examining Bosch's work through this lens the effect of his images on the author will be examined and explained. In this manner, others can use this technique to discover and explain their own reactions to Bosch's work.

Written

The written part of this dissertation explores how the Gaze draws the viewer into the narrative and through semiotics how the creation of meaning is developed on different semiotic levels. It examines the historical setting in which Bosch created his work, and compares his paintings to the art of contemporaries and followers thus setting the stage for how and why his work is not only different, but also enigmatic, powerful and thought provoking. By examining various interpretations of Bosch's works, coupled with a decipherment of the *Garden* using the Lacan's Gaze and semiotics, the author argues that it is not possible for there to be a single, authoritative interpretation of the work. This dissertation shows that semiotics opens

new avenues of investigation and interpretation; one where signs have multiple meanings and anxiety, or psychological tension in the viewer can ensue.

Visual/Creative

The visual/creative section examines the intersections of ekphrasis, semiotics, and clay sculpture through the lens of Hieronymus Bosch's work. Specifically, there are no ekphrastic interpretations of Bosch's work in clay sculpture that speak directly to the emotion produced by viewing the *Garden*.

It is the purpose of the creative element of this dissertation to show the ekphrastic function as one that produces new "text," not a recapturing of the original in another medium. "Not only poets may respond to a work of visual art with a creative act in their own medium, transposing the style and structure, the message and metaphors from the visual to the verbal" (Bruhn). Ekphrastic art is not a direct copy of another's art nor is it a copy with just a different effect. As is with the author's work, an ekphrastically translated piece of art is a work that is created in the artistic style of one genre and translated into a different genre: poetry into painting, painting into poetry, paintings into music, or in this case painting into ceramics.

In the exhibition, these interpretations, translations, or personal responses of Bosch's *Garden*, the ekphrastic sculpture does not draw attention to the qualities that are immediately available in the painting, but embodies qualities beyond the physical and visual aspects of the work.

An artist examines life by translating what is seen into what is felt, sometimes overtly expressive, and sometimes quietly creative. The author/artist ekphrastically connects Bosch's *Garden* to clay re-envisioning the work subsequently speaking to the

viewer with a different voice. Additionally, through this exercise the artist found that using the language of art to express what artists know is to be reminded that written language can be limiting. Sometimes words only serve to express less than the desired idea or sometimes more than intended. But if the work of art has the right amount of ambiguity, as is with the meaning of the *Garden*, then ideas, different than those intended can be communicated. And, it is under these circumstances that viewers can question their own premises and art becomes a process of inquiry.

There are several elements in the *Garden* that are unifying elements: the creatures, the textures, the use of color, the flight pattern of the ravens from the left to the right panel, and the interaction of the parts to the whole. The elements of the painting create anxiety while the sculptures create a sense of unease within the artist and the viewers of the exhibition.

The creatures represent individual fears, anxieties, and worries. Bosch used symbols specific to his day and time, signs that pointed to certain ideals or thoughts that would cause the viewer uneasiness, concern, worry, and anxiety. And, in fact, Duchamp said that it is not possible to separate art and emotion. How these signs and symbols are interpreted is a matter of semiotics.

The personal response to the *Garden* through the concept of ekphrasis expanding from the written to the visual consists of a series of sculptures expressing the emotions generated by the painting. The exhibition captures the emotion stirred in the artist and recreated for the viewer. Bosch's ambiguity opens up the possibilities of recombining his intent and thereby allowing the artist to capture moments of slippage and explore this in the works presented for this dissertation. These works in turn will

be interpreted using the same system, giving the viewer an added layer of understanding of how each piece has been inspired by the painting and is a personal translation. Other viewers, of course, will have responses other than the artist's intended response, which reinforces the premise of the timelessness of the painting.

Theoretically, this dissertation shows how the Gaze draws viewers in to the painting, trapping their minds in the various details, such as the small creature climbing up the hill in the left panel of the *Garden* creating a complex interaction between the painting and the viewer, and semiotics is used to interpret how those signs speak to the viewer in general, and to me as an artist.

Artistically, the theories are applied to these ekphrastic responses in clay. Ekphrasis puts theory into practice and magnifies elements in the Garden that are not readily accessible to the viewer. Therefore, the installation as a whole forms the ekphrastic response to the Garden.⁷

Notes

¹Hereafter referred to as *The Garden* or *Garden*.

²Fraenger argues that Bosch was merely painting a representation of Bosch's religious sect. As a member of the Adamite sect of the Brethren of the Free Spirit, Bosch would have practiced sexual promiscuity. It has been suggested that the great appeal of Fraenger's interpretation lies in its "novelty and sensational character" and "accords well with the 20th century conceptions of free love and uninhibited sexuality as positive values in themselves and as remedies for various psychic and social ills." (Gibson)

³"Gaze" refers to the process of looking which creates a network of relationships, and "gaze" refers to a specific instance of looking (D'Alleva 106).

⁴There are two dominant models of what constitutes a sign, the French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sander Peirce. Saussure offers a 'dyadic' or two-part model of the sign comprised of the signifier (the form the sign takes), and the signified (the concept it represents). He was focused on the linguistic sign as not a link between a thing and a name, but between a concept and a sound (Chandler).

Presently, the signifier is interpreted as the material, or physical form of the sign. The signified is a mental construct referring indirectly to objects in the world. For Saussure signs refer primarily to each other and no sign makes sense on its own but only in relation to other signs (Chandler). Saussure's dyadic model lacks the referential object that is present in Peirce's Triadic model.

Peirce's model offers the Representamen (the form which the sign takes (not necessarily a material object)), the Interpretant, (not the interpreter but the sense made of the sign), and the Object (or that to which the sign refers). Pierce states "[A] sign, in the form of a Representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is, creates in that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign" (Peirce 1931-58. 2.228). The sign that it creates is called the Interpretant of the first sign. Peirce goes on to say that the sign stands for something, its Object. It stands for an object, but not in all respects, but in a reference to an idea, which he calls the ground of the Representamen (Peirce 1931-58 2.228). Unlike Saussure, Pierce understood that the process of interpreting signs generates more signs.

⁵I have chosen the word translator and translation/ personal response over interpreter and interpretation as ultimately I am translating or giving a personal response to Bosch's work or some aspect to it into something that speaks to me, not interpreting what he meant.

⁶Ekphrasis, traditionally a written response to a work of art is here expanded to embrace a different medium, clay.

⁷See Coda for further discussion on exhibition.

CHAPTER II

THE PECULIAR CASE OF HIERONYMUS BOSCH AND THE LIMITATIONS OF ICONOGRAPHY

Viewers can take a variety of approaches when examining paintings to get at the “meaning” of the work. Some approaches are historical while others are biographical or stylistic. Each approach is not without limitations, pitfalls, and critics. This chapter examines two different approaches used to garner meaning from works of art: iconography and semiotics. Iconography laid the groundwork from which semiotics took making-meaning to the next level by considering complex viewer interactions with paintings.

Iconography as a method of interpretation arises from synthesis of cultural influences and from the understanding that objects carry determinable meaning. In fact, the iconological method contributes to the viewer’s understanding of the culture rather than an understanding of the artistic intent of the work (Bedaux 10). In *Early Netherlandish Painting* (1953), Art Historian, Erwin Panofsky argued that many everyday objects symbolized religious ideas, with the result being a total “sanctification of the visible world” (142). He believed having these objects carry additional meaning allowed early Netherlandish painters to reconcile the natural world with the need to represent the tenets of the Christian faith. “Disguised symbolism” was introduced because the new naturalism of early Netherlandish painting was seen to have diminished

the sacred. When sacred items needed to appear in the same painting as secular figures, there needed to be a way to include the sacred without being overtly religious.

Disguised symbolism was the mechanism by which viewers were drawn into the painting (similar to the Lacanian Gaze),¹ a mechanism by which they were invited to sit and stay awhile, to be awed by the details and hidden meanings of the objects. Panofsky stated that in early Flemish paintings the method of disguised symbolism was applied to each and every object, man-made or natural. “The more painters rejoiced in the discovery and reproduction of the visible world, the more intensely did they feel the need to saturate all of its elements with meaning” (142). Disguised symbolism was both symbolic because it was naturalistic in representing the visible world, and naturalistic because it was symbolic (Moxey “Perspective, Panofsky, and the Philosophy of History” 99). The problem, however, was that if “all forms meant to convey a symbolical idea could appear as ordinary plants, architectural details, implements, or pieces of furniture,” and with every object the potential carrier or hidden meaning, interpreters needed to be deliberate and careful in assigning symbolic significance to a given motif. An obvious hazard in the application is that there is no end to the meanings that objects could be assigned, leading to what Julius Held describes in his review of Panofsky’s compendium as “an invitation to shoot from the hip” when assigning disguised meaning to everyday objects. However, Panofsky tempers Held’s concerns with a call for the use of common sense:

We have to ask ourselves whether or not the symbolical significance of a given motif is a matter of established representational tradition . . . ; whether or not a symbolical interpretation can be justified by definite texts or agrees with ideas demonstrably alive in the period [the work was made] and presumably familiar to its artists . . . ; and to what extent such a symbolical interpretation is in keeping

with the historical position and personal tendencies of the individual master. (142-43)

With this note of caution, Panofsky gives an example of disguised symbolism through an analysis of the Annunciation panel of the *Mérode Altarpiece* by Robert Campin (Figure 1).² Focusing on the central panel, which shows the Annunciation, Panofsky describes the implications of disguised symbolism on the pot of lilies:

[T]he pot of lilies is perfectly at ease upon its table, and if we did not know its symbolical implications from hundreds of other Annunciations we could not possibly infer from this one picture that it is more than a nice still-life feature. Because of the many other times lilies appear with Mary in the same scene, however, we are safe in assuming that the pot of lilies has retained its significance as a symbol of chastity; but we have no way of knowing to what extent the other objects in the picture, also looking like nice still-life features, may be symbols as well. (142-43)



Figure 1. Campin, Robert. *Annunciation Triptych*, central panel, Mérode Altarpiece, c. 1427-32, oil on oak, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

For the informed viewer, this painting includes symbols of a reminder of all events that have passed and through representation of the wisp of smoke from the extinguished candle, all things that are to come. The added dimension of disguised symbolism changes the painting from a narrative painting focusing on a single event, the Annunciation, to one that alludes to the most “profound truths of Christianity” (Munsterberg) and as reverent witness to the founding event of Christianity.

Panofsky argues that Early Netherlandish paintings diminished the sacred content but through symbolism, the viewer sees a blend of “present, past, and future, of real things, and things symbolic, proved to be less and less compatible with a style which, with the introduction of perspective, had begun to commit itself to naturalism” (140). However, in Van Eyck paintings, the combining of disguised symbolism with non-symbols is merged into one. “In his [Van Eyck] compositions the significant objects neither compete with non-significant ones nor do they ever step before the footlights” (144). He continues, “[I]n Jan Van Eyck, then, all meaning assumed the shape of reality; or to put it another way, all reality is saturated with meaning” (144).

In *Arnolfini Wedding* (1434) (Figure 2), where the disguised symbolism is less overt, Panofsky sets the stage by describing the interior of the room where Giovanni Arnolfini and his wife are presented to the viewer in full length. He describes the clothing in detail including colors, and addressed how the couple is holding hands. “Rather stiffly posed and standing as far apart as action permits, they do not look at each other yet seem to be united by a mysterious bond” (202). All in all it is a very static painting on the surface, but underneath, is saturated with meaning.



Figure 2. van Eyck, Jan. *Arnolfini Wedding*. 1434, oil on oak, National Gallery, London, England. Web.

Panofsky describes the *Arnolfini Wedding* as both religious and secular; it is a painting that glorifies the sacrament of marriage. “Here is the fact that a marital oath is taken is further emphasized by the lone candle burning in the chandelier and obviously not serving for a practical purpose because the scene is in broad daylight” (202). A burning candle is seen as a symbol of the all-seeing Christ and was required for the ceremony of taking an oath in general, but according to Panofsky it had a special reference to matrimony: “the marriage candle was a Christian substitute for the classical “taeda” which was carried to the church before the bridal procession, or ceremoniously given to the groom, or as in this case, lit in the house of the newlyweds” (202). With the subject identified, not as a portrait but as the representation of the sacrament of marriage, the atmosphere of mystery and solemnity, which seems to pervade this portrait takes on

“tangible form” (203) linking the sacrament of marriage to the physical object of the candle.

In his discussion of Van Eyck, Panofsky states that Van Eyck’s style: symbolizes the structure of the universe which had emerged at his time, from the discussion of “two infinities;” he builds his world out of his pigments as nature builds hers out of primary matter. The paint that renders skin or fur, or even stubble on an imperfectly shaved face seems to assume the very character of what it depicts . . . the emphasis (of his paintings) is on the quiet existence rather than action. (181-82)

Close observation of the painting shows that every hair on the terrier is carefully brushed in, the folds of the material on the figures are meticulously draped around the bodies, and the convex mirror on the wall realistically distorts the images within Figure 3. Panofsky reminds us that the painting is rife with disguised symbolism as the dog is often seen on tombs of ladies, and was the accepted symbol of marital faith (203).



Figure 3. van Eyck, Jan. Detail, *Arnolfini Wedding*, 1434, oil on oak, National Gallery, London, England. Web.

Correct cultural and historical identification of motifs is the prerequisite for correct iconographical analysis, as correct analysis of images, stories, and allegories is a

prerequisite for a correct iconological interpretation, which in some cases proves problematic. In fact, Keith Moxey argues that if iconographic analysis were all it took to understand the meaning of a painting, then once the viewer had identified all objects in terms of their historical and cultural settings his task would be complete (*Panofsky's Concept* 266). And while iconography is a tool with which viewers can tackle reaching for meaning in a painting, this proves problematic for Bosch's imagery as the disguised symbolism within was to a large extent incapable of being read and it was this very quality that enhanced its appeal for the humanistic elite, who were patrons of Bosch (Moxey). Further, without intimate knowledge of a given culture, some viewers are left outside the circle of meaning due to this lack.

Looking at Bosch's imagery as signs rather than icons, semiotics insists that viewer interaction must be considered when interpreting and creating meaning.³ If Bosch's imagery served a variety of different functions for those who originally experienced it, then no system of disguised symbolism would have worked for all viewers. Falkenburg states that the *Garden* was "intended as a debatable painting—a summa or speculum of learning in its own right as much as a pictorial entremets on which guests of Henry III could feast their eyes and project interpretive wit" (11).⁴ In this case then semiotics opens up the possibility of the interpretations of signs as carriers of complex multiple meanings.

And while iconography works for most Early Netherlandish art, Panofsky himself admits that no compendium of Early Netherlandish painting is complete without a discussion of Bosch, and goes on to say:

Such a discussion, however, is not only beyond the scope of this volume, but also, I am afraid, beyond the capacity of its author . . . In spite of all the ingenious,

erudite and in part extremely useful research devoted to the task of “decoding Jerome Bosch,” I cannot help feeling that the real secret of his magnificent nightmares and daydreams has still to be disclosed. (357)

Bosch’s non-traditional use of traditional symbols in a traditional manner may explain Panofsky’s feelings. While the lily in paintings of the Madonna suggested chastity, Bosch had no such traditional symbols in his paintings. This example is not to say that some of the items did not carry determined meanings, it means that Bosch’s images carried a certain amount of ambiguity, and slipperiness so that meaning that could not be addressed by iconology alone.

James Marrow also believes that works from this period cannot be adequately defined by iconographic content alone; his hypothesis is that many of the principal forces that shaped and directed artistic invention during this period were focused on how art works “that is . . . how it structures experience and interpretation” (152). He concludes his article by stating that the artist called into play the role of the painting-viewer interaction in constituting the art’s meaning, not just the objects contained therein. Bosch’s *Garden* includes deliberately non-iconic symbols and the ability for iconology to produce meaning fails. It is this ambiguous complexity that baffles the critic and generates theoretical debate through time.

Panofsky presented paintings within his voluminous book that were all similar in style and structure, and when he encountered a painting or style that did not fit the traditional structure his theory began to unravel. Indeed, iconography can only take the viewer so far down the path to meaning, as even Panofsky admitted that some paintings are indecipherable. “Iconographic art history can be blind to the visual specificity of an image, whereas a semiotic view, not hung up on the historical dimension, may be able to

do more justice to both the visual and the historical aspects of that image” (Bal *Art History and Its Theories* 8). Without an historical anchor meaning is no longer a repository of “the values invested in it during its creation” and becomes one that continues to make meaning (Moxey). In short, semiotics translates iconographic conventions and insistence on designated meanings for a particular object thereby freeing up works of art to various and varied interpretations (Bal).

Bal further expands, stating that the world around us is chaotic, a fact that has changed little since Bosch’s lifetime, and in order to live in a particular era, people must find ways to grasp it, and establish some sort of order. One way to create order is to name things, so that others can have a similar lexicon and communicate ideas (Bal *On Meaning-Making: Essays in Semiotics* 4). How the artist, viewer, and culture go about creating meanings is understood through the complex interrelationships between image and viewer as set forth in the set language and framework of semiotics (D’Alleva 29). Semiotics picks up where iconography stops in that it brings a more complex interaction between the viewer and the painting.

According to Bal, semiotics offers both a theory and a set of analytic tools that are not bound to a particular object domain or time period, (i.e., art history) thereby freeing art historical analysis from the problem of transferring concepts from one discipline or era to another. Bal describes semiotics as a “supradisciplinary” theory that can be used in conjunction with sign-systems. “As a supradisciplinary theory, semiotics lends itself to interdisciplinary analyses, for example, of word and image relations, which seek to avoid both the erection of hierarchies and the eclectic transferring of concepts” (*Semiotics and Art History: A Discussion of Context and Senders* 246). In semiotics, the artist has one

meaning for a particular sign, the viewer another (Bal *Art History and Its Theories* 7). Each sign represents something other than itself, and the viewer, based on his/her own particular cultural criteria, work to make sense of these signs. Semiotics “translates the art historian’s iconographic conventions, and iconography’s insistence on a designated meaning for a particular object” (Bal *Art History and Its Theories* 7) thereby freeing up works of art to various and varied interpretations.

Additionally, Moxey states:

At first glance the iconographic method might be regarded as sympathetic to semiotic interpretation, it is after all involved with the sifting and sorting of the conventions utilized in the representation of different subjects; its epistemological basic, that is, the truth claims which iconographic knowledge is associated, cannot be reconciled with a semiotic method.” (“Semiotics and the Social History of Art” 992)

Iconography as applied by Panofsky became the means by “by which the historian could obtain access to the mind of the artist and period under consideration.” A semiotic approach attempts to define ways in which works of art actively work to generate meaning (Moxey “Semiotics and the Social History of Art” 992-993) where the meaning ascribed to the work is continually renegotiated over time. Moxey argues semiotic theory allows for the variety and relativity of the cultural values inherited from the past, as well as “our ability to interpret and manipulate those values in the creation of new cultural meaning (*Practice of Theory* 61).

Ultimately, semiotics is centrally concerned with reception. Bal argues that Barthes stated semiotic investigation will not teach us what meaning must definitively be attributed to a work; it will not provide or even discover a meaning but will describe logic according to which meanings are engendered (Bal *On Meaning-Making* 159). She further explains that semiotic analysis of visual art does not set out to produce definitive

interpretations of works of art, but rather to explore how works of art become comprehensible to viewers, or how viewers make sense of what they see and create meaning (Bal 159).

Barthes sought to analyze how meanings that are attributed to images are not a “natural” result of what is seen. In other words, meanings are not self-evident and universal in how what is seen is understood. Further, the meanings that are attributed to images are linked to culturally specific associations (Curtin 55).

In his article *Rhetoric of the Image*, Barthes explores how meaning gets into images. He lays out a conceptual framework for studying word and image relations in cultural artifacts. “[T]he text directs the reader through the signified of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others; by means of an often subtle dispatching, it remote controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance” (156). In this manner semiotics is very much like iconography, or Lacan’s Gaze, directing the viewer to a particular object.

However, unlike iconography where the message is one-way, from the object to the viewer, the significance of images or objects in semiotics is not understood as a one-way process from image or object to the individual but the result of complex interrelationships between the viewer, the image or object, and other factors as mentioned above. The significance given to these images and objects goes beyond the initial or superficial meaning of what the image or object literally is, and is based on personal, if not culturally and mutually agreed upon meaning. In fact, at any given time, meaning is context dependent, and directly related to and connected with such factors as cultural literacy. The meaning given to a particular sign relates to the cultural ideals that a

particular society has learned, at a given time, and of which they may not be consciously aware.

It is through semiotics that signs can move with generations to create new meaning based on cultural signs of that particular era.⁵ For example, using semiotics, to examine Bosch's imagery as signs, Moxey insists that it is up to the individual viewer to interpret and create meaning. He further explains that this individual interpretation is contrary to Panofsky's model of iconological scholarship that is focused on discovering the hidden secrets requiring "penetration of the sealed chamber." Moxey uses the notion of the sign to draw attention to the way signifying systems of the past can be interpreted in light of the signifying systems of the present. He believes that Bosch's imagery must have served a variety of different functions for those who originally experienced it, and as such, no system of disguised symbolism would have worked for all viewers.

A semiological approach to art suggests that meaning does not take place on the surface of a painting, but is built from the ways in which different signs are organized and how these signs relate to one another, both within the painting, and between the painting and the viewer. Therefore, while contemporary semiotics is concerned with the creation of meaning through images, how the images are read depends on perspective, i.e., past history, cultural beliefs, cultural heritage, childhood narratives, faith and religion. Signs combine like words to tell a story, and the viewer's interpretation of a sign is directly "conditioned by the ways in which our culture has taught us to recognize it" (Moxey "Semiotics and the Social History of Art" 989).

Additionally, signs are being interpreted by means of other signs, and that our reception of signs is conditioned by the ways in which culture has taught people to

recognize them, then, in this manner, “[S]igns engender other signs *ad infinitum*” (*The Practice of Theory*, 33). Ultimately, the viewer or translator does not need to present a fixed interpretation, but rather the translator is only another player in the “endless process of semiotics” (Moxey “Semiotics and the Social History of Art” 998).

Some signs are overt, and understood by all, while others are more covert and “readable” to only a select few. Anything can be a sign as long as someone interprets it as “signifying” something, which is referring to or standing for something other than itself. A strawberry is piece of fruit until someone comes along and states that it represents fertility or lust. In semiotics, there is no need for Julius Herd’s caution; it is appropriate for each item to have a variety of meanings, because each individual viewer approaches the work of art from an individualistic point of view. Visual art uses signs that have both a symbolic and visual meaning: the cross stands for Jesus, the dove for the Holy Trinity, the owl for evil, lilies for chastity.

In other words, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, or objects, but signs themselves have no intrinsic meaning and only become signs when the viewer invests them with meaning. Symbols and signs may also simply be a representation of the real thing but never the actual object it represents.⁶ Therefore, ultimately, semiotics is concerned with meaning or “how representation, in the broad sense generates meanings or the processes by which we comprehend or attribute meaning” (Curtin 51). Signs are the cornerstones of ekphrastic responses, as one small component can create an expansive body of work or works inspired at a deeper, more personal level.⁷

In visual art, semiotics interprets messages based on their signs and symbolism. Most signs are iconic; physically standing for a particular object, as well as symbolic

where the relationship between objects is culturally learned. There is not necessarily a logical connection between the symbol and what it represents. Flags are symbols, but what it is communicating must be learned. According to Saussure, the heart of semiotics is the realization that the whole of human experience is an interpretive structure sustained by signs. Humans use these signs to convey feelings, thoughts, ideas, and ideologies. Semiotic analysis uses cultural and psychological patterns that underlie language and art. There are many similarities between a visual image and the image that written language creates. Semiotics translates a picture from an image to emotions, feelings, or other images. Art acts subconsciously to make meaning of the signs.

Paintings are composed of parts that combine to create signs that the viewer uses to create meaning: bits of lines, shapes arranged on a surface, color and texture. When the various parts in a picture wash, flow, and blend into each other and the background, and when taken as a whole, these images can be read as a narrative, giving the viewer a story, a story that is often linked to a particular cultural context. Painters work in a pictorial language following a set of standards, basics, and rules of “picture” making. Meanings are not just ‘out there’ waiting to be identified or discovered, but are ‘read into’ signs, the viewer plays an active role.

Michael O’Toole argues that semiotic codes in visual arts involve three universal functions: representational, modal, and compositional, which are realized through configurations of “paint on canvas or ceramics in space.” The Representational function addresses typical themes such items as action, events, or portrayals. While the Modal focuses on perspective, clarity, light, color, scale, and of particular interest here the

Gaze.⁸ The compositional function addresses what type of art genre the work falls into, i.e., Baroque, Impressionism, Surrealism, etc.

It is important to keep in mind that the casual viewer of a work of art most likely lacks the factual knowledge and the technical vocabulary to provide a deep, meaningful interpretation of a particular work. This often leaves the viewer grasping at the meaning of the symbols and going with a gut reaction. The viewer becomes an active participant in the narrative of the painting, and reads the signs that create the individualistic interpretation. This modal is the relationship the Gaze creates between the viewer and the work of art. It also speaks to the relationship of the artist's attitude towards the reality he/she is creating. According to O'Toole, "semiotics requires a certain explicitness of description . . . the explanation of what the artist 'can mean'" (195). This, more than disguised symbolism, opens the work up to discussion of the possible interpretations which can be debated because of the number of interpretations available, which is certainly true in the case of Bosch.

While iconography is an effective tool for identifying objects and their meanings in a particular time period, semiotics addresses the complexities of meaning-making. Viewers bring their own cultural ideals, and based on signs within the painting create an internal narrative that is personal to them. How the viewer is drawn into the painting is explained by Lacan's Theory of the Gaze.

Notes

¹See Chapter II: Lacanian Gaze.

²Panofsky suggests that the image may have been influenced by society, in that a lion on a bench was part of the latest fashion (198).

³Moxey uses the notion of the sign to draw attention to the way signifying systems of the past can be interpreted in light of the signifying systems of the present and that these systems, both past and present, are ideologically informed.

⁴Lloyd Benjamin suggests that if what Panofsky says is correct, and the increased naturalism was felt to pose a threat to sacred content “would it not be reasonable to expect to find naturalism rather than symbols smuggled into paintings?” (16). Benjamin goes on to say that contrary to Panofsky, artistic activity is not a purely rational, logical, planned event, and that the sole purpose is not for the viewer to decode the contents of the painting to arrive at the true meaning. He states “the uniqueness of Jan’s art is not his symbolism but, rather, the daring manner in which he makes the sacred realm accessible to humanity in an experiential manner” (17).

⁵How the viewer is drawn into a work of art to develop these meanings is discussed in Chapter II.

⁶ For a detailed discussion of how this works, see Magritte’s Pipe: Treachery of Images.

⁷See Chapter V for discussion of ekphrastic interpretation of Bosch.

⁸Further discussion of this can be found in Chapter II.

CHAPTER III

THE GAZE: HOOK, LINE, AND SINKER

Historically, the psychoanalytical approach to art addresses the influence of the unconscious on an artist's work. This analysis relates directly to the artist's psyche, which is explored through the examination of their earliest childhood experiences. Symbols that recur in art works are linked to early experiences, resulting in the illumination of the artist's unconscious fantasies and preoccupations. Although art history and psychoanalysis are two distinct fields, both are concerned with the power of the image, its symbolic meaning, and the process and products of creativity (Schneider-Adams).

Sigmund Freud was interested in the relationship between the artist's inner life and the artistic product rather than the aesthetic of the object per se (Spitz 13). He argued that works of art, like dreams, express the secret unconscious desires of the artist and that the work produced is a manifestation of the artist's own neuroses. In his book, *On Dreams*, he wrote, "The dream-thoughts which we first come across as we proceed with our analysis often strike us by the unusual form in which they are expressed; they are not clothed in the prosaic language usually employed by our thoughts, but are on the contrary

represented symbolically by means of similes and metaphors, in images resembling those of poetic speech.” He further stated that psychoanalysis was able to take interrelations between the impressions of the artist's life, chance experiences, and works, and from these interrelations construct the artist's [mental] constitution and the instinctual impulses at work (From *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*).

Ultimately, Freud believed that art was, for the artist, an activity aimed at mitigating unsatisfied desires (1913). Psychologically, how the viewer experiences art is also important, but people who are not artists do not necessarily have a working knowledge of how to “get meaning” from a work of art. So, how are viewers drawn in and captivated by a work of art? The theory that links psychoanalysis and art is the Gaze.

For purposes of discussion, the “gaze” refers to a specific instance of looking at an object. The “Gaze” refers to the process of looking, which creates a complex network of relationships between the viewer and the object being viewed (D’Alleva 106).

Contemporary art criticism (Chicago School of Media Theory) focuses on how the Gaze acts as a vehicle for communication and how exactly a gaze transmits information and assumptions about the viewer and or the viewed.

It is the Gaze that transcends the artistic creation and embraces implications beyond the work's function as a mere work of art. When referring to how different

artistic creations are visually analyzed, the Gaze is equivalent to what the viewer desires to see and masks what is actually seen by the eye. The viewer gazes because they are lured in by the work of art to see what it is it wishes the viewer to see, covering what is actually there. Lacan stresses that the gaze is the lure that brings viewers into the painting and the Gaze that is returned is the hook that keeps them there. Ultimately, psychoanalysis through the Gaze provides tools to account for the dynamic process of art by mediating between the sender (artist) and the receiver (viewer), allowing for a deeper conversation among all participants.

Jacque Lacan's Theory of the Gaze has been applied not only to psychoanalysis but also to art. He developed his theory by focusing on an imaginary level of interaction with objects; objects that are not merely the passive recipients being looked at, but rather, in a reversal of the common view of vision, objects also look at the viewer as well. Lacan states: "On the side of things, there is the gaze, that is to say, things look at me, and yet I see them. This is how one should understand those words, so strongly stressed, in the Gospel, they have eyes that they might not see. . . . That they might not see what? Precisely, that things are looking at them" (Lacan *Four Fundamentals* 109) (Figure 4). In this manner, the Gaze produces the anxious state in the viewer, as the psychological effect of gazing brings to the realization that the viewer is also a visible subject. As the

viewer enters into a relationship with the painting, the Gaze is the glue that brings them together and holds them there.



Figure 4. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, Man in Cave, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid. Web.

Lacan argues that the world is all seeing, and does not provoke our gaze because it is not “exhibitionistic” in nature. However, when an object or work of art begins to provoke our gaze, “that is when the strangeness begins” (Lacan *Four Fundamentals* 75). Under common circumstances, the viewer is unaware of the effect. Lacan talks about the function of the painting in relation to the person “to whom the painter, literally, offers his painting to be seen” (Lacan *Four Fundamentals* 101). The artist gives the viewer something to feast his eyes on, and gives the viewer something to contemplate.

However, Lacan further explains that despite the meaning the artist intends, it is not how it will be received, as personal interpretations are affected by the nature of the person doing the viewing.

For Lacan, the mirror stage is the threshold of the visible world, the area that is seen, but is perhaps not comprehended on a conscious level (*Ecrits* 77). He defines the mirror stage as a function of the *imago* that establishes the relationship of an organism and its reality. “[T]he mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation--and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality” (*Ecrits* 77). This stage is the arena where the painting first speaks to each viewer’s unconscious. Consciously, the viewer is unaware of the gaze, and unconsciously the viewer feels the anxiety that the Gaze creates.

In his lecture on *Line and Light*, Lacan explains that a painter does not wish to be seen himself, but that he creates a painting for the eye to look at. In this process of looking the viewer is forced to surrender their gaze (Lacan 101). Additionally, in “our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze” (Lacan *Four Fundamentals* 73). As Lacan presents the Gaze, there are always three layers in the

painting: the Gaze within the painting, the Gaze between the painting and the viewer, and the Gaze between the viewer and the painting.

When the Lacanian Gaze is applied to works of art, it explains how the viewer interacts with art through the activation of the unconscious mind. On the first level, there is a Gaze that occurs within the painting itself. In the *Garden*, “the Treeman [in the right-hand panel] looks backward not only towards his own emptiness. His gaze passes via the scene of unbridled lust in the central panel to Adam in the Garden, in the left hand panel. Meanwhile, the trajectory of Adam’s gaze carries forward to the Treeman’s open end. “As Adam’s macabre mirror in the picture, the Treeman reveals that the self, unable to grasp its own corruption, is always already in Hell” (Koerner 94) (Figure 5). The Gaze of the painting has the viewer moving back and forth between the first and last panel.

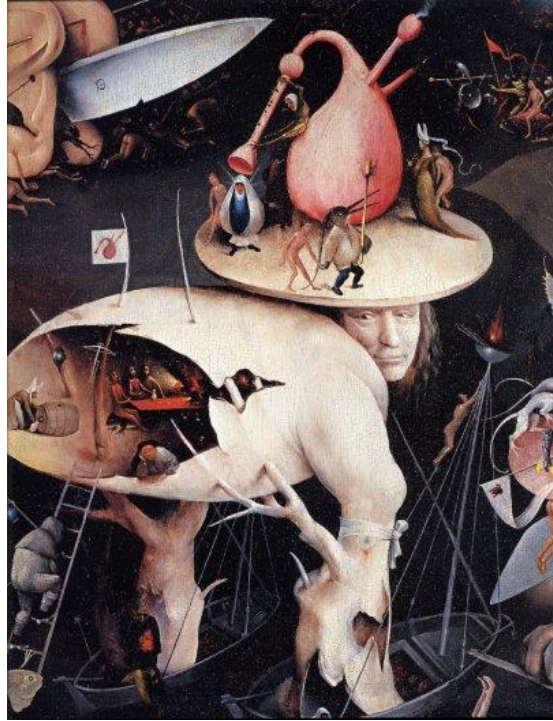


Figure 5. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, Treeman in Hell panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid. Web.

In the second level between the painting and the viewer, the Gaze that exists is a pre-existing gaze, a type of staring at us by the work of art. In general, Lacan tells us “it is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects” (Lacan 106). He further explains how we receive these effects stating that there is an initial relationship we have with the world where “something is given-to-be-seen to the seer” or viewer (Quinet 139). It is important to note here that before the viewer can see the object, the object is given-to-be-seen. “The pre-existence of a gaze is correlated with the given-to-be-seen of the subject” (Quinet 139). While there is a gaze that aims at the viewer from the painting, the third level of the Gaze cannot be seen as it is obscured and

excluded from the viewer's field of vision. This level of the Gaze speaks directly to the viewer unconscious level, and is where semiotics comes into play.

Lacan expounds on the Gaze in his examination of Hans Holbein's painting, *The Ambassadors* (1533) (Figure 6), putting all three levels of the Gaze together. Of particular interest to Lacan was the skull, a classic example of what he called the object-gaze (Lacan 88). "This picture is simply what any picture is, a trap for the gaze. In any picture, it is precisely in seeking the gaze in each of its points that you will see it disappear" (Lacan 89). Lacan further states that the singular object floating in the foreground, which is there to be looked at, is there in order to catch the mind of the viewer in its trap. (Lacan *Four Fundamental* 92). From this point forward, it is as if the painting regards the viewer (level two). The skull reminds the viewer that they, along with their fantasies, desires, and cultural perspective, are all implicated in how the scene appears. As Lacan puts it, the floating object in the foreground "reflects our own nothingness, in the figure of the death's head" (Lacan *Four Fundamentals* 92).

Interestingly, viewer participation is required to garner meaning from the painting. The viewer cannot grasp the object until their eye reaches a specific location at the side of the painting, increasing the interaction with the work. In this manner, the viewer of the painting is placed under the gaze of the painting. "In front of the picture, I am elided as subject of the geometral plane" (Lacan *Book XI* 108). It is here that the

object in the painting becomes an alien “thing,” the viewer becomes another type of “thing,” and between these two “things” shuttles, interminably, the gaze. The lure has worked and the unconscious level of interaction with a work of art has captured the viewer.



Figure 6. Holbein, Hans. *The Ambassadors*, 1533, oil on oak, National Gallery, London, England.

In *Seminar X*, Lacan clarifies that the Gaze is always present in manifestations of anxiety and the author contends that no matter the interpretation or the generation looking, the *Garden* is bound to create some anxiety in the viewer. Whether it be religious anxiety created by the symbols reminiscent of the seven deadly sins, the perils of going against the teachings of the Church, or the viewing of naked people en masse, anxiety is created on an unconscious level. Antonio Quinet, member of the ECF, a

school of psychoanalysis founded by Lacan, contends that imagery gives shape and form to things viewers then perceive through representational signs, and the reality created is not the same for every person.

However, Lacan explains “if common images make for certain individual differences in tendencies, they do so as variations of the matrices that other specific images constitute for the “instincts” themselves” (85). While standing in front of *The Ambassadors*, the viewer is captivated and, fascinated, by the objects in the shelves and the well-dressed men flanking a globe. While perhaps using Panofsky’s iconographic methods to apply meaning to the objects, viewers are being drawn in by the gaze in the form of the undefined object in the front. The gaze brings the viewer to the front, but the Gaze draws the viewer to the side, working to make meaning of the vague object in front.

In *Ecrits*, Lacan refers to the works of Bosch noting the paintings as a whole as well as the details, referring to them as “an atlas of all the aggressive images that torment mankind” (85). It is the collective effect of these images that are common to all mankind and to which all can relate on a deeper level. Thus, the power of the painting lies within the anxiety that is aroused at the unconscious level by viewing the painting, which is further complicated by individual interpretations of signs.

The Gaze is a mode of interaction that the viewer has with the painting and, as indicated by Quinet, the Gaze returned is individual and personal, dependent on the

reality of the viewer. Through a discussion of Lacan's Gaze in a manner that illuminates the inner workings of the painting, the mystery behind the sustained popularity of the *Garden* can be explained.

CHAPTER IV

BOSCH BEFUDDLES VIEWERS AND CRITICS ALIKE

Little is known about Bosch's life, which seems rather fitting given the enigmatic nature of his work. Unlike other artists of the time, such as Dürer, Michelangelo or Leonardo da Vinci, Bosch did not keep diaries, letters or journals that would aid in understanding the development of his artistic style, explain his thought processes, or explain the meaning behind the *Garden*. Applying traditional models of interpretation, such as art historical or philosophical modes of explanation, do little to elucidate the meaning behind the *Garden*. This particular work escapes essential interpretation that reinforces the limitations of various modes of traditional art analysis. Art historians have applied the popular art historical methods of the day to the interpretation of the *Garden*, only to have Bosch's meaning elude them.

Given the proscribed parameters of each methodology for assessing or evaluating art, it is only natural that these models fail when applying them to Bosch. Many artists give the viewer and the academician hints, or out-right explanations of their art. Bosch, however, is different.

What is known about his life and artistic activities must be gleaned from the municipal records of 's-Hertogenbosch and the account books of the Brotherhood of Our Lady.¹ Bosch's father, Anthonius van Aken (died c. 1478) was the artistic adviser to the Brotherhood of Our Lady (Gibson 15, 17) and Bosch's father was one of five sons, of which four were known to have been painters (Gibson 15). It is also known that Bosch's

grandfather came from Germany, giving the family their name of Van Aken. Bosch's first name, Hieronymus, is a combination of Latin and Dutch meaning Jerome, and his last name came from his hometown.

's-Hertogenbosch, a largely a middle class town, was the capital of the Brabant Province. It was a thriving commercial town with extensive trade connections to northern Europe, Spain, and Italy. It was one of the four largest cities in the area located near the Belgian border with Holland. And while there is no record that Bosch ever traveled any distance from this town, he was well acquainted with other artists and the artistic styles of the Italian Renaissance.

During his lifetime, the Cathedral of St John's (Sint-Janskathedraal) was undergoing renovations for devastation that occurred from a fire. This Cathedral is well known for its Gothic style, including the rows of curious figures, monsters, and workmen sitting astride the buttresses, all slightly reminiscent of Bosch's creatures (Figures 7 and 8). These similarities show that this Cathedral was a possible influence on his work.



Figure 7. Sint Jans Kathedraal. Detail, gargoyle, c. 1380, Den Bosch, Netherlands. Web.



Figure 8. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, Hell panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid. Web.

Another influence as suggested by Michael Camille, and expanded upon by Moxey in his article “Hieronymus Bosch and the ‘World Upside Down’: The Case of the *Garden of Earthly Delights*,” is the marginalia of medieval manuscripts. Marginal² illustrations could be profane or bizarre. Depictions of sexual exploits, auto, homo-, hetero-erotic, as well as illustrations of bestiality are not uncommon in the margins. Camille explains that by the end of the 1400s no text was spared “the irreverent explosion of marginal mayhem” (22). And, as Bosch was an active member of his church and the Brotherhood, there is no doubt that he had access to materials with edges full of “babewyn”³ or composite creatures, chimera. Further, Bosch’s members of Hell are being tortured in a manner similar to those in the marginalia illustration below (Figures 9 and 10).



Figure 9. Detail, illuminated manuscript, N.d.



Figure 10. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, Hell panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c.1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid. Web.

Moxey argues that the inspiration for Bosch's creatures "lie in the fantastic forms traditionally used in the decoration of ecclesiastical architecture and furniture, objects of

decorative art, and margins of illuminated manuscripts” (120). He further suggests that manuscripts influenced Bosch, and that Bosch was not trained as a panel painter, but as a manuscript illuminator (121). Like Bosch, the true meaning behind these enigmatic creatures has long been a discussion point in the conversations of meaning and medieval art.

Additional cultural influences are seen in *Death and the Miser* (1490) (Figure 11) and in Bosch’s renditions of Hell. *Death and the Miser*, among others, had a specific moral and social message. A dying man is torn between salvation and his own avarice. At the foot of the bed there is a younger man, possibly this same man in a memory, throwing coins into a chest with one hand while grasping a rosary in the other. Perhaps the old man is remembering this scene as he is facing his last test. According to the National Gallery, this type of deathbed scene derives from an early printed book *Ars Moriendi* (Art of Dying).



Figure 11. Bosch, Hieronymus. *Death and the Miser*, c.1485-1490, oil on panel, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Web.

In 1484, there is record of the book *Vision of Tondalus* in Bosch's hometown, which was probably accessible to Bosch, based on his position in society (Benesch *Hieronymus Bosch and the Thinking of the Late Middle Ages* 109). This book told the story of a writer being guided by his guardian angel into the depths of Hell and then to the heights of Heaven in the spirit of Dante's *Inferno*. It is possible that the written rendition of Hell found in this tome influenced the rendering of Bosch's scenes of Hell.

Bosch's first recorded transaction with the Brotherhood occurred in 1481 and from that time, he received a number of commissions from them, including a stained glass window (1494), a crucifix (1512) and a chandelier (1513).⁴ Bosch's work is not dated⁵ leading to speculation as to the order and artistic development of his work.

Further, an exact chronology of his work is difficult because only seven of the approximately 35 to 40 paintings attributed to him are signed and none are dated. However, despite the speculation, there is a distinct progression in the style and complexity of his compositions.

His earlier works are typical of art created during that period and show Bosch was concerned with religious subjects. John Berger, art critic and novelist, states “[T]he way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.” Church teachings, widespread belief in damnation, fear of Hell, fear of ex-communication, politics, books, illustrated manuscripts, and other works of art all influenced his work. In Bosch’s day there were frequent fires and in 1463 church records show that hundreds of homes in his town were destroyed. The memories of this and other fires are represented in his scenes of Hell in the *Garden*, *The Haywain Triptych* (1512) (Figure 12), or *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (1490) (Figure 13).

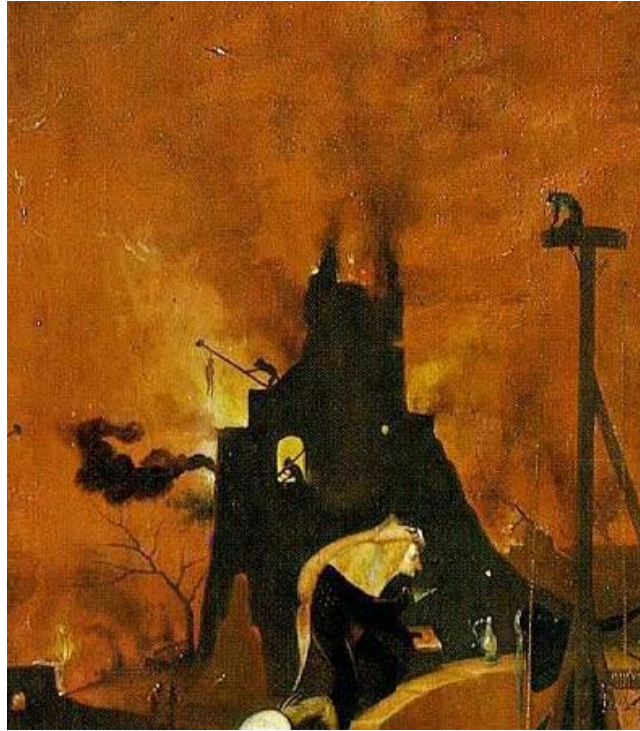


Figure 12. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, Hell panel, *The Haywain*, 1512-15, oil on panel, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid. Web.

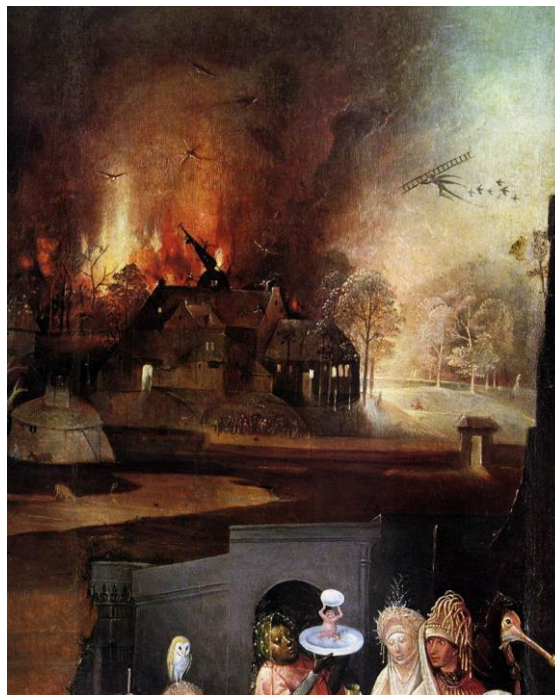


Figure 13. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, fire scene, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, 1490, oil on panel, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid. Web

For Bosch, creating art was a family tradition. His father, brother and other family members were craftsmen for the Cathedral. Initially, creating art may have been a perfunctory exercise, but later there was an emotional quality to his work that is seen in the faces of the denizens of Hell: anguish, and fear, and unbelief *that they were in Hell*. Bosch captures these expressions in such a manner that either he was internally struggling with such emotions, or was observing these emotions in everyday life.

Based on art historically accepted dates for his work, it is interesting that once Bosch married (c. 1481) there was a change in his art. Before his marriage, the subject and representational mode of his paintings were more traditional in nature, for example: *Adoration of the Magi* (1475) (Figure 14),⁶ or *Ecce Homo* (1475-85) (Figure 15).⁷ In other words, they were works for the Church or personal devotion. Marrow suggests that the primary task of artists in Bosch's era was to create works that conveyed teachings of the Church in an approachable, understandable manner.

After his marriage, the subject matter continued to be somewhat traditional, but his phantasmagorical creatures started to make an appearance. His wife was from a well-to-do family and therefore Bosch's driving force to make art changed. He no longer was dependent upon commissions from the Church and thereby became freer to express himself. He was able to break the rules of painting and move into a more fantasy driven mode.



Figure 14. Bosch, Hieronymus. *Adoration of the Magi*, c. 1475, oil and gold on oak panel, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York. Web.



Figure 15. Bosch, Hieronymus. *Ecce Homo*, 1475, tempera and oil on oak panel, Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany. Web.

When comparing later works such as the *Last Judgment* (1504-08) (Figure 16) with earlier works such as the *Adoration of the Magi* the differences are evident. The colors in the *Last Judgment* are darker, the focal point is not Mary and Baby Jesus but on Hell's sadistic and tortuous activities. The *Annunciation* is about the creation of life and there is a tranquil, ethereal quality to it; the *Last Judgment* is full of darkness, death, and destruction.

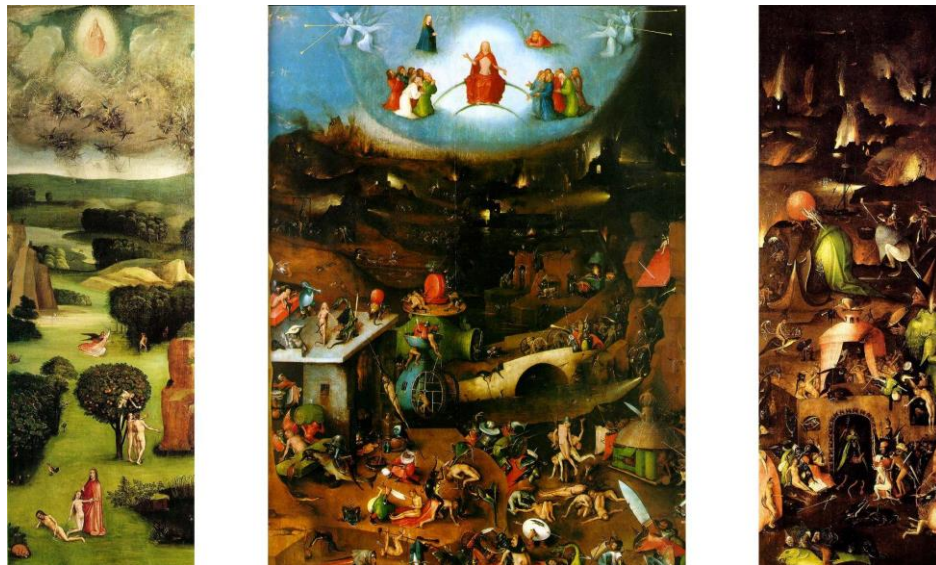


Figure 16. Bosch, *The Last Judgment*, c. 1482, oil on wood, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria. Web.

Since Bosch left no writings, his personal or internal influences are unknown and are only a matter of supposition. Looking at his works, he certainly had an active imagination, but it is difficult to determine whether the influences were predominately internal or external. However, as time passed, Bosch's work became more complex, more intricate, and more bizarre. While Bosch is well known for such works as *The Haywain* (Figure 17) or *The Last Judgment* triptych, his most controversial and widely discussed painting is the *Garden* (Figure 18).



Figure 17. Bosch, Hieronymus. *The Haywain*, 1512-15, oil on panel, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid. Web.



Figure 18. Bosch, Hieronymus. *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c.1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid. Web.

Bosch accepted commissions from patrons and as such was influenced by their demands. The *Garden* was most likely a commissioned work, one not originally meant for public display. Given the individualistic nature of the features of the people represented in the painting, it is entirely plausible that the people in Hell were actual representations of political figures of the day. Many have suggested that the Tree-man is Bosch himself, further making it reasonable that others were actual people as well (Fischer). This insight gives his work an interesting internal/external interaction. However, the personalization of the people in Hell must have increased the anxiety for the viewer, as making a political statement against the government or Church was probably not the best or safest action.

From the earliest known commentary on the *Garden* (c.1560) to the present, theorists have tried unsuccessfully to ascribe meaning to objects, spotlighting the underlying, hidden meaning of the painting, but failing to explain the sustained fascination. “Some of earliest commentators on Bosch’s paintings clearly noted the uniqueness of his subject matter and admitted that they could not understand all of the details before their eyes” (Snyder 3). While it is not prudent to enumerate all of the theories surrounding Bosch’s work, some are worth mentioning, though none have gotten Bosch quite right. None of them have found the “key” to open the door to the locked room, wherein explanation of the allure, of the sustained fascination may be found.

Fra Jose de Siguenza pointed out in 1605 that Bosch differed from painters of his time in that Bosch “had the audacity to paint [man] as he is on the inside” (qtd. in Snyder 35). Siguenza argues that Bosch painted uniquely because he was looking for a niche for himself and his painting style, one that would make him stand out from the likes of

Durer, Michelangelo or Raphael. “. . . [H]e embarked upon a new road, one where he would leave the others behind while he was not behind anyone else and on which he would turn the eyes of all towards himself” (qtd. in Snyder 36). Koerner states that although these creatures are striking, they probably had a precedent somewhere else, “since imagination works along predictable lines” (77). He continues to argue that Bosch painted in an ambiguous manner to make viewers uncertain of what they see.

And still, while scholars have disagreed about the proper interpretation of the painting, author James Snyder states that with few exceptions, scholars have seen the triptych as images reminiscent clearly of a Dante-esque vision of Hell:

[E]laborate condemnation of the follies and sins of man totally given over to the delights of the flesh and the fate that waits him in Hell, where he must continue to indulge in these senseless activities forever while being prodded and tortured by frightening demons who attack him from every side, never letting him rest.” (20-21)

Dante describes the souls in the Ante-Inferno as those who, in life, could not commit to good or evil so they ran in a futile chase after a blank banner day after day. Hornets relentlessly stung these souls while worms lapped up their blood. Moving towards the Third Circle of Hell, Dante watches the souls of the Lustful swirl around in a terrible, inescapable storm. Other circles of Dante’s hell further mirror Bosch’s creatures: The Gluttonous lie in mud and endure a rain of filth and excrement; the fifth circle’s swampy fetid cesspool is full with the Wrathful struggling with each other for eternity; the sullen choke on mud, etc.

While Snyder contends that Bosch’s art was much appreciated and wildly imitated (ix), theories presented don’t capture the underlying complexities presented in the painting.

In 1560, Felipe de Guevara reported that Bosch was the “inventor of monsters and chimeras” (Snyder 28) and spoke to the “astonishingly new version of religious subject matter that explored the haunting inner workings of man” (Snyder 3). And indeed, comparing Bosch to such fifteenth-century Netherlandish painters as Van Eyck, it becomes obvious that there is a great difference in artistic styles. Van Eyck’s masterpieces captured “hushed gothic chambers where demure Madonnas sit quietly and looked out a bit shyly” (Snyder 4), and were typical of the period. The world of van Eyck’s paintings was one of “peaceful resignation tinged at times with a certain self-consciousness or melancholy,” but even still it was “a place of serenity, peace, and hope, assuring people of salvation through the good Christian life” (Snyder 4).

Bosch’s paintings are a dramatic contrast to other Netherlandish paintings:

The coolly observed and precisely rendered details of Robert Campin’s *Betrothal of the Virgin* (1420) and the dignified restraint of Rogier van der Weyden’s *Descent from the Cross* (1435) have nothing in common with the devil-infested landscapes of Bosch’s *Garden of Earthly Delights*. The art of the older masters is firmly rooted in the prosaic substantial world of everyday experience, but Bosch confronts us with a world of dreams, nightmares in which forms seem to flicker and change before our eyes. (Gibson 9) (Figures 19, 20, and 21)



Figure 19. Van Eyck, Jan. *The Virgin Chancellor Rolin*, 1433-34, oil on wood, Musee du Louvre, Paris, France. Web.



Figure 20. Campin, Robert. *The Betrothal of the Virgin*, c.1420, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.



Figure 21. Van der Weyden, Rogier. *Descent from the Cross*, 1435, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.

Walter Gibson, art historian, places Bosch's work squarely within the historical context of the day, stating that much of Bosch's imagery (no matter how bizarre) was nothing more than a "typical expression of the culture." He cautions against putting modern sensibilities on Bosch's paintings. While modern culture may be comfortable with sex as part of the human condition, in the Middle Ages sex was seen as a contributor to man's fall from grace. This contrast is echoed by James Snyder, who describes the world of Bosch as one filled with a "curious and disturbing modernity" (2), a world of visual translations of verbal metaphors and puns drawn from both biblical and folkloric sources (Gibson).

Gibson argues that what Bosch was showing the viewer was "a false paradise whose transient beauty leads men to ruin and damnation, a motif common in medieval literature" (87). Yet, despite expansive knowledge and research of Bosch, Gibson was

not able to pinpoint Bosch's elusiveness. He concludes his discussion on the *Garden* by saying that the painting reflects the Renaissance's taste for "highly original, intricate allegories full of meaning . . . apparent only to a limited audience" (99). This theme is echoed by Moxey's article "Hieronymus Bosch and the 'World Upside Down': The Case of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*," where he explains that Bosch painted for the humanistic elite.

In a further attempt to decipher the *Garden*, some theorists move from an analysis of the painting to an analysis of the painter. In 1936, Theodor Reik, published an article stating "Bosch was clearly a neurotic personality who was driven to paint his phantasmagorias in order to preserve his sanity" (Gibson xxiii). Later "authorities" continued to diagnose the painter with a variety of psychological ills including schizophrenia, Oedipus complex, sadomasochism, oral, anal and phallic tendencies, and homosexuality. Nonetheless, all of the theories concerning Bosch and his paintings, while interesting and sometimes entertaining, focus on the history of the images in the painting and their relation to the culture of the day or to the plight and neuroses of the painter.

In 1937, art historian, Charles de Tolnay asserted that Bosch drew upon the dream symbolism of his day to "create an image of mankind's collective dream symbolism of an earthly paradise, a fulfillment of its deepest unconscious wishes, while at the same time showing their vanity and fragility" (qtd. in Gibson, xxiii). He further contends that Bosch "does not rest content with pictorial and literary tradition, or with his own imagination, but anticipating psychoanalysis, uses the whole acuity of his penetrating mind to draw from his memory and experience dream symbols that are valid for all mankind" (de

Tolnay 30). De Tolnay contended that Bosch's purpose was to show the evil consequences of sensual pleasure "and to stress its ephemeral character" (31) in a statement reminiscent of Freud. He further calls this work a "Divine Comedy" and explains that in this creation of the world, Bosch has created a new iconography where "Bosch sees the universe as a transparent ball of glass in which reflections create the impression of roundness; within its womb rests the primeval landscape of the earth . . . [a] mysterious vision of the world in which man has not yet found his place" (33). And while de Tolnay contends that Bosch anticipated modern psychoanalysis, he only got it partly right. To date, there is no single discussion that unlocks the door to the painting for all viewers.

Recent discussions of Bosch include: Laurinda Dixon, Virginia Tuttle, and Larry Silver. Dixon's analysis of *The Garden*, contends the painting is readable through the lens of the medieval science of alchemy. During that time, scientists communicated their theories symbolically "in order to hide their discoveries from ignorant, unworthy, hostile or competitive eyes" (233). She argues that the *Garden* is set up as a guide to the four basic steps of alchemical works, where the entire process was to imitate God's creation of the earth. "The *Garden of Earthly Delights* triptych is identical to the basic alchemical allegory which sees distillation as the cyclical creations, destruction, and rebirth of the world" (99). Iconographically, Dixon reads the painting with a scientific eye: birds represent vapors from distillation, the pink fountain in the left panel represents a pelican vase used for circulation and condensation of vapors, and eggs as the macrocosms of the world. Her interpretation is logically laid out, but does not account for the long-standing popularity of the painting.

Tuttle argues that the woman in the first scene is not Eve but Lilith, Adam's first wife. Focusing on the left panel and the creation of Lilith she states that "Lilith, the Devil Queen, would be an especially appropriate subject in the context of this most bizarre of Bosch's works" (119). Curiously, the scene on the left does not follow a traditional iconographic reading in that Adam is not asleep, on his side, nor does it appear the Eve has been brought forth from Adam's rib. In fact, she points out that the position of the woman is "quite unusual" (121). "Bosch has portrayed her [Lilith] in the traditional creation position, but he has shown her raised up from the earth, as if she were being created *independently* and immediately following Adam's creation" (123). Tuttle explains that presence of "demonic beasts" coincides with the Biblical version of the Talmudic story of the creation of Lilith (123). However, viewers who are unfamiliar with the story of Lilith would miss these details thereby leaving them confused as to Bosch's intended meaning.

Similar to Moxey, Larry Silver identifies the sources of Bosch's images as manuscript illustrations, prints, and other panel paintings. Silver further explains how Bosch's understanding of sin, morality, and punishment shaped the dramatic visualizations of Hell depicted in the *Garden*. Ultimately, Silver argues for an interpretation that combines the secular with the sacred to offer moral instruction. If this is the case, the modern viewer might find it difficult make meaning from the painting.

However, it is not in the power of dreams, alchemy, relation to marginalia, or the critic's Christian vision of Bosch that can decode the painting, but the Lacanian Gaze and the application of semiotics to the viewer that best explains the reason this painting has held power over viewers and captivated the interest of theorists for more than 500 years.

Notes

¹In 1486-87 Bosch's name appears for the first time in the membership lists of the Brotherhood of Our Lady, with which he and his family were closely associated for the rest of his life. Gary Schwartz, in his recently published compendium on Bosch, *Jheronimus Bosch, The Road to Heaven and Hell*, enumerates the number of times Bosch's name was entered into town records. There is not surprisingly less than one or two entries per year, with each entry addressing property transfers, payment for services. Scant information is given concerning his paintings, with only two mentions of purchasing materials, and a record in 1505 of ownership of 4 works by Isabella the Catholic of Castile, 1505 purchase of an undisclosed painting by Philip the Handsome and 1516 Margaret of Austria owns a St. Anthony.

²Marginalia refers to the illustrated margins of medieval manuscripts.

³Camille states "babewyn" was a term used by Chaucer when describing a building decorated with 'subtil compasinges, pinnacles and babewyns,' and developed into a word that was a catchall for all hybrids (12).

⁴Unfortunately, the records are all that remain of these works of art. "They probably disappeared when 's-Hertogenbosch was taken from the Spanish in 1629 by Prince Henry and his Dutch troops and Catholic splendor was replaced by Calvinist austerity" (Bosing 14).

⁵For further information on this and a discussion concerning a suggested date grouping of Bosch's paintings see D. Bax, *Hieronymus Bosch: His Picture-Writing Deciphered* (1979).

⁶New York.

⁷Frankfurt.

CHAPTER V

THE ENDURING APPEAL OF THE *GARDEN*

To date, there is no definitive interpretation of Bosch's *Garden* that explains the power the painting holds over its viewers. The Lancanian Gaze and semiotic theory combine to show that the power of the *Garden* lies within the anxiety and apprehension that is aroused in the unconscious by the viewing of the painting regardless of the generation.

Several of Hieronymus Bosch's paintings have held power over viewers as well as art historians for generations. *The Haywain*, the *Last Judgment*, *The Temptation of St Anthony*, along with the *Garden* are typical of the works that have created seemingly endless discussion among critics and historians alike. Bosch's use of medieval symbols, his preoccupation with sinfulness and Hell, and the lack of details of his own life have long been sources of fascination, speculation, frustration, and questions. Koerner called Bosch "the inventor of invention, the fantasist of fantasies, the producer of singularities that he produced" (87).

A superficial narrative of what the casual viewer might see when looking at the painting goes like this: In the left panel of the triptych, Jesus in a pastoral setting is presenting the newly formed Eve to Adam in a garden representing the Garden of Eden. The landscape behind them consists of a pond with an elaborate fountain as the central feature and a variety of animals, birds, and amphibians scattered throughout the gently

rolling hills that rise into four mountainous formations. In the background there is a flurry of black birds flying through a circle in a rock formation.

The middle panel is crowded with naked people. There are more ponds and lakes but instead of only animals they are crowded with people who appear to be enjoying themselves, lounging in pools of water, riding on horseback, or talking in small groups. This energetic representation of groups of nude people and large sized animals and fruit abruptly changes into a cold wintry wasteland in the right panel.

Here a distant village burns, ponds are frozen, and the fountain in the left panel is replaced by “Treeman,” a tree with the face of a man, and its limbs in a boat that is caught fast in the ice. People are being tortured by all manner of creatures, a giant ant-like creature is eating men and crapping them out, hands are being run through with knives, and men and women are attacked by strange creatures. At this point, if it did not happen in the previous panel, the casual viewer may begin to feel discomfort and anxiety by the contents of the painting. The combination of “ordinary” creatures with the “inordinary” creatures and with strange juxtapositions and usage of size relationships of man to animal, the viewer is drawn into the work but overwhelmed by the images and unsure how to begin to make meaning.

There has been much interest in viewing and analyzing this painting in terms of the symbols contained within. However, when symbols and the formal language of the interpretations are replaced with the Lacanian Gaze and semiotics, it is not necessary to understand in detail the meaning of those symbols, the catalogue of sins professed by the Church, or the depth of the artist’s neuroses to answer the question of universal meaning.

It is the individual viewer who provides the answer through the anxiety brought upon them by the Gaze and shared cultural knowledge in semiotics.

The overall mood of this painting is set through the intrusion of strange, exotic, and unreal creatures, waiting and watching, luring us deeper and deeper into the painting. The animals and creatures, while not directly engaging the viewer's eye, are provoking anxiety through the creation of signs in the mind of the viewer, perhaps evoking hidden childhood fears of the monster under the bed, or of the one hidden in the dark corners of the room.

In the bottom right-hand corner of the middle panel one man stands behind another peering out of a hole in the hill, staring directly at the viewer (Figure 4). It is here the gaze brings us face to face with the known, yet unknown. A world where logic and experience fails, here there are no guidelines, the viewer becomes lost and confused and victim to the unconscious; it is here the viewer find themselves full of anxiety.

In *Seminar X*, Lacan says that the gaze is always present in manifestations of anxiety. And, anxiety is not without an object, but the object is unknown; it is the unrecognizable that causes the anxiety. Through the power of the gaze, the viewer is inexorably drawn into a strange, exotic, unnatural and unreal world.

A Lacanian interpretation begins with the first panel where there is a feeling of disquietude. Consciously, what we see could be interpreted as the promise of a bright future, happiness and joy, but this interpretation does not sit well with the unconscious. It is in the unconscious where the conscious meaning is overshadowed by the strangeness and unreality of the objects and mutated animals present. Ravens circling above add to this sense of disquietude; creatures that are not quite right, or that do not exist rise from

the pond in the lower right-hand corner of the left panel. Birds with three heads and a hooded, long nosed creature reading a book indicated that something is amiss in this world. In fact, upon closer inspection, rising to the viewer's conscious level, there is an unsettling feeling that evokes a familiar sense of anxiety; anxiety that is being produced by the viewer being lured in to a world that is hypnotic, mysterious, and possibly dangerous. Death is evidenced by the large cat with prey in its mouth, two birds fight over an amphibian, and an appendageless creature is devouring a frog in the foreground as a flock of ravens circle in the background (Figure 22).



Figure 22. Bosch, Hieronymus. Details, left panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.

The middle panel brings us to the realization of the futility of life. This frantic frenzy of nude people is not titillating, but is rife with a sense of impending doom and danger. As viewers, we are drawn in by the “Where’s Waldo” effect of people engaging

in what, on the surface, appears to be pleasurable activities; yet, there is a sense of uneasiness that is created, perhaps through the sheer numbers of naked people, engaged in sexual fantasies, or perhaps through the anxiety that we cannot shake the knowledge that even in play, everyone dies. There is a sense of foreboding through the connection of the ravens in the first panel that are now perched on the heads of three women in the pond (Figure 23).



Figure 23. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, women in pond with birds, middle panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.

In fact, looking closer at this panel it can be seen that there is really no happiness. Men are grabbing women, pushing them; others are encased in glass structures. The people portrayed seem to be acting under some sort of self-destructive compulsion not

out of love or joy. There is something disquieting and disturbing about animals larger than humans, looming over them in an unsettling manner.

The final panel culminates in an illustration of inevitable doom. It is a dramatic rendition of the future of mankind, full of haunting visions of pain, suffering and agony. It is the end point of the human condition; destiny is clear. It is the fear that death and damnation is what awaits us. The ravens return, flying out of the anus of the person being consumed by a giant ant-like creature (Figure 24). The ravens are turned to the far left panel, perhaps leaving the realm of hell, returning the “paradise” only to begin again.



Figure 24. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, Creature in chair eating human, Hell panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.

However, the ultimate lure for this triptych is the Gaze that is returned and the anxiety it produces in the viewer insinuating that humans cannot escape the fear of death and hell. On the surface, the painting can be interpreted historically as containing symbols of the day or the embodiment of the teachings of the Church typical of the

period. Lacanian psychoanalytic theory demonstrates that there is so much more going on behind the visual layer. It is the anxiety created by the ambiguity from not clearly understanding the signs and the fear of death that speaks unconsciously to that viewer, grasping the unconscious anxieties of all mankind. The culminating result is that the viewer is dragged through each panel of the painting, feeding the anxiety of the viewer at the unconscious level, leaving the viewer dazed and confused at the conscious level. The power of the painting lies in the feeding of the universality of the anxiety and emotion transmitted by the Lacanian Gaze.

Bosch's *Garden* is full of signs that viewers have long been imbuing with meaning. The core of semiotic theory here is the definition of the factors involved in the process of sign making, interpreting, and the development of conceptual tools that help viewers grasp the process as it goes on in various arenas of cultural activity.

In interpreting paintings it is often discussed and debated how meaning is derived, what images mean, and how they should be interpreted. The linguistic sign consists of content, such as sense and meaning of an expression like letters or sounds. Images are as fully expressive as natural language, but are separate and structured independently of it. And though pictures are quite different from texts, they are not wholly different. Like texts, most paintings are composed of parts, though the parts are bits of lines and shapes arranged on a surface. When the various shapes in a picture wash, flow, and blend into each other and the background, they do not seem very much like words, but when taken as a whole, these images can be read as a narrative, giving the viewer a story, a story that is often linked to a particular cultural context. So, just as linguists follow rules of language construction, painters work in a pictorial language following a set of standards,

basics, and rules of “picture” making. Meanings are not just ‘out there’ waiting to be identified or discovered, but are ‘read into’ signs, created in the minds of viewers through the signs in the painting.

Moxey states that Bosch’s imagery was to a large extent incapable of being read, and it was that very quality which enhanced its appeal for the patrons. Using semiotics to examine Bosch’s imagery as signs, Moxey insists that it is up to the individual viewer to interpret and create meaning. He further explains that this individual interpretation is contrary to Panofsky’s model of iconological scholarship that is focused on discovering the hidden secrets requiring “penetration of the sealed chamber” (357). Moxey uses the notion of the sign to draw attention to the way signifying systems of the past can be interpreted in light of the signifying systems of the present. He believes that Bosch’s imagery must have served a variety of different functions for those who originally experienced it, and as such, no system of disguised symbolism would have worked for all viewers.

So, how does the viewer translate what is seen with what is felt? O’Toole states that the Gaze of the painting is its ability to draw the viewer into the world of the painting (193). The translation of the work through the viewing of signs and symbols seems simplistic at first. The viewer sees something that is registered as scary or dangerous. Regardless of the language of the viewer, this particular scene is unsettling, discerning, and something that viewers would want to avoid at all costs.

A semiotic approach shows that the search for a single universal meaning in the *Garden* will be in vain. The *Garden* is a veritable explosion of symbols and images that not only assaults the viewer’s conscious but also through semiotics, tells us the images

produce sub-images in the mind to which the viewer reacts. In this manner, Bosch's *Garden* is full of signs that viewers have long been imbuing with their own personal and cultural meaning. Through the process of sign making and interpreting, Bosch sent a message and the viewer returned a meaning, both parties influenced by various arenas of cultural activity. Yet, through time, some of the original meaning presented by the artist has been lost, obscured, and changed, thereby developing or allowing for the creation of new meaning based on a culture's interpretation of signs. In addition to personal meaning, these new interpretations can be artistically expressed in a variety of manners.

CHAPTER VI

MODERN ARTISTIC RESPONSES TO BOSCH

Bosch's continued popularity with artists lead to a number of artistic imitators as well as others who were inspired to take Bosch's work creatively in a new direction. Bosch's influence extends through such artists as Bruegel, Dali and the Surrealist movement, to modern day artists such as Rabiq Shaw, Carla Gannis, and Ali Banisadr. Those who used Bosch's work as inspiration for their own personal responses created new works through the process of ekphrasis. An ekphrastically translated piece of art is a work that is created in the artistic style of one genre and translated into a different genre: poetry into painting, painting into poetry, paintings into music, or in this case painting into ceramics.

Originally, the Greek rhetorical exercise of evocative description, ekphrasis has long been understood and has been practiced primarily in a narrow sense: as the literary representation of visual art (Rosand 61). As a rhetorical tool, taught to Greek students, ekphrasis brought the experience of viewing an object to a listener or reader through highly detailed, descriptive writing.¹

Ekphrasis was intended to share an emotional experience through a connection to the written word. For example, discussing representation in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle approves the "enlivening of inanimate things" with vivid description, or the "doing of

something to the life” as a kind of imitation in which an object sets “things before the eye” (Adamson 115).

Homer’s description of Achilles’ shield in Book 18 of the *Iliad* (800 B.C.E.) stands at the beginning of the ekphrastic tradition (Wagner 12). The passage describing the shield moves beyond a verbal description of the details of the shield to a verbal description that dramatically weaves elements that could not be part of a shield, such as movement and sound with things that could be, such as physical material and visual details. Additionally, the description is vivid enough to make the shield seem real in the imagination of the reader despite the fact that it never existed.

During the Italian Renaissance, in a new development, the rhetorical form of ekphrasis became an important artistic genre and artists made visual works based on written descriptions of art that had never existed, or existed only through a written description.² Using rhetoric successfully was a means of demonstrating artistic dexterity and eventually ekphrasis was understood as a skilled way of describing art and other aesthetic objects.

In the second half of the 18th century, ekphrastic writing suddenly appeared in a new context. Would-be travelers were eager for vivid descriptions of works of art. Without any way of publishing accurate reproductions, details of actual art had to be conveyed to readers through highly descriptive verbiage. During this time, William Hazlitt, John Ruskin, and Walter Pater published “grand set-pieces” of ekphrasis about older and contemporary works of art (Munsterberg). For these authors, the fact that the object existed mattered a great deal. In fact, the goal was to make the reader feel like a participant in the visual experience. Much like the ancient Greeks, the more

convincingly this was done, the more effective the writing was judged to be (Munsterberg).

In the 19th century John Keats wrote an exemplar of ekphrastic poetry, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," (1819). Like Homer, Keats mixed descriptions of things that could have been visible on a Greek vase with things that could not have been. However, unlike Homer, Keats made himself and his own experience of viewing the vase an important part of the poem. This paradigm shift reflects a "transformation in the genre of ekphrasis, which increasingly came to include the reaction of a particular viewer as part of the description of an object" (Langbaum 53).

In creating a work of art based on a visual representation or a literary description, the ekphrastic work must reflect an aspect of the original work but not necessarily the entire work. For example, Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem *On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery*, Shelley does not try to include the entire painting. Instead he focuses on details such as the midnight sky, the mountain peak, the hair, lips, and eyelids of the Gorgon (Brinzeu 248). In this example, ekphrasis is the personal response of one work of art into another, where the new work focuses on one element of the original work not readily accessible to the viewer/listener. This type of ekphrasis becomes a means by which one medium of art relates to another by translating it, thereby causing the new work to take on a unique life of its own.

Ultimately, an ekphrastic translation attempts to inhabit or confront, to speak to or against, or to re-envision the art to which it is responding. Whether a written piece or a personal visual work, the object of ekphrasis is grounded in the art of seeing; its function is to produce new "text," not to simply recapture the original in a different medium

(Davidson 77). Ekphrasis as the description of a work of art defines and describes the work's essence and form. However, a detailed description of the work of art is not sufficient for ekphrasis. "It has to be followed by an interpretation of some sort which should state the author's (artist's) personal opinion on the painting and draw the attention of the reader (viewer) to the fact that there is something not immediately visible" (Brinzeu 251). The artist stands in the middle between the original work of art and the viewer. In viewing the ekphrastic work of art, a new perspective on the original work of art is layered with the artist's reaction to the original work. Whether or not the viewer understands what the ekphrastic artist was thinking, the viewer sees the artist's reaction to the original work.

The artist's role in this ekphrastic process of sign making and translating is to serve as both viewer and artist. As Panofsky states in *Studies in Iconology*, the broader a person's everyday life experience, the greater his or her ability to order, recognize, and categorize data within the visual world. Further, "[A]ll in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act" (Marcel Duchamp). Wagner states, "inspired by semiotics . . . a new ekphrasis will have to consider the visual image as a sign, a discursive work that comes from and returns to society" (35). Through signs, ekphrastic works of art will be signs for other viewers providing details not readily accessible, and thereby allowing the viewers to connect the original creations with new personal insights.

Visual art depends on the signs just as much as language does.³ Without these signs there is no way of interpreting the meaning. Curtin argues that there has been a

strong tendency to think of visual images not as language but as “un-coded and possibly universal in their meaning” (55). In this respect, it is useful to think of visual images as text-like, although Curtin warns that it is important to be wary of linguistic models “dominating our understanding of visual representation” (55). Bosch’s works are mesmerizing, even amusing for the humorous satires they contain, disconcerting for the mysteries which they still harbor, and above all, “they are [an] inexhaustible repertory and of a variety which cannot flag of fantastic images, anecdotes and stories, symbols, and literary narrations” (Bango 118). The symbols contained in Bosch’s paintings are not fictitious; rather they held meaning for the painting’s intended audience. His symbols are religious in nature, more intent on advancing the narrative of the painting or acting as a didactic tool to educate the masses on the perils of not following the religious teachings of the day than on expressing the fantasies of the conscious or unconscious mind.

Bosch painted visions dredged from the depths of the late medieval mind.⁴ With a ghoulish wit, Bosch’s images highlight hellish infernos that are teeming with monstrous atrocities. In many of Bosch’s works, man co-exists with other beings, real and imagined, strange and wonderful. His style attains a higher degree of naturalism and reality in the non-human characters than in the humans of his paintings. Not only was this facet of his work highly unusual, but also the combinations he created, while understandable to the medieval viewer, are more dreamlike than symbolic to the modern viewer.

In the years following Bosch, there was universal sensibility; he had a line of followers, his works were created as tapestries, and there were artists who imitated his style. An artist who incorporated elements of Bosch, yet was a pioneer in his own right is

Pieter Bruegel the Elder. Today he is renowned for his landscape paintings, but in his day, his fame came from his paintings and his engravings. He was considered the “great imitator of the knowledge and fantasies of Bosch” (Davis 291), and was referred to as the second Bosch (Davis 291).

In Bruegel’s *The Fall of the Rebel Angels* (1562) (Figure 25)⁵ the incorporation of Boschian fantasy shows an early ekphrastic personal response to Bosch’s works. This scene of an inextricable tangle of overlapping figures shows angels falling from heaven and turning into hellish creatures. The composition and juxtaposition of characters in the painting is complicated and almost Baroque in its treatment of space (Wied). The coloring is the most varied of any of Bruegel’s works, with a subtle rhythmic cycle of yellows, reds, greens, and blues in all their tones. Looking at the style and treatment of space, it is natural to think of Hieronymus Bosch. His work was clearly an inspiration to Bruegel; but the similarity ends there. While one artist is devoted to the invention of creatures and structures, the other artist brings his innovations to life.

Bruegel's monsters, have life burgeoning in them— yelling, writhing, growling, colliding. The struggle of wild, revolting devils against lean, dainty, tidying angels, is the kind of confrontation Bruegel is often drawn to: fat vs thin, gluttons vs prudes. He's not quite of the Devil's party, but he can certainly feel with both sides. (Lubbock)

Looking at Bruegel's works, one thinks of the creatures themselves.



Figure 25. Bruegel the Elder, Pieter. *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, 1562, oil on panel, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Brussels. Web.

In visualizations of St. Anthony, by Bosch, Ernst, and Dali, while all are fantastical in representation, each is distinct and different. Bosch's representation is realistically fantastical (Figure 26), Ernst's has a direct Boschian flavor (Figure 27), while Dali's is dream-like (Figure 28). The paintings have the same subject but speak a different language.

In Bosch's painting, the *Temptation of St Anthony* (c. 1500), he includes a plethora of bizarre shapes and figures with a grotesque blending of human, animal and vegetable forms in the center panel. The space is distorted and superimposed with architectural forms that, while structurally sound, are visually precarious. In the background is Bosch's exquisite rendition of a raging fire spreading across the countryside.



Figure 26. Bosch, Hieronymus. *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, c. 1501, oil on panel, Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, Portugal. Web.



Figure 27. Ernst, Max. *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, 1945, oil on canvas, Wilhelm-Lehmbruck-Museum, Duisburg, Germany. Web.



Figure 28. Dali, Salvador. The Temptation of St. Anthony, 1945, oil on canvas, Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels, Belgium. Web.

Bosch portrays man's struggle against temptation, as well as the omnipresence of the Devil in his rendition of St. Anthony. In the central panel, similar to Ernst's rendition, St. Anthony is beset by an array of grotesque demons, their bodies being amalgamations of human, animal, vegetable, and inanimate parts. These creatures include a man with a thistle for a head, and a fish that is half gondola. Bizarre and peculiar as the images seem, they can be interpreted as renditions of juxtapositions of the real and unreal, conscious and unconscious, combined in a surrealistic fashion.

In the background of the center panel is a landscape depicting a burning village. In the middle and foreground of this panel, impossible constructions, bridges, and towers are assembled with the effect of dreamlike creations. Vistas, hollows, and tunnels open and lead nowhere.

In Max Ernst's rendition of the *Temptation of St. Anthony* (1945), there is an element of magic, mystery, and terror. Ernst's works had a quality of imagination, full of ferocity, and cultivated visions of the half-sleeping, half-waking state. He arranged objects to compose a dream world where he explored the "chance meeting of two remote

realities on a plain unsuitable for them” (Rodríguez). This juxtaposition of the natural and unnatural is apparent in his painting.

Ernst places St. Anthony in an “inextricably entangled dense web of nightmarish creatures that engulf St. Anthony in a phantasmagoria of the unconscious mind” (Walther 609). Pictured in a red monk’s habit, St. Anthony is suffering terrible tortures and hallucinations of Bosch-like creatures engulfing him. Creatures are clawing at St. Anthony’s face. These creatures have metamorphosized from plants into animals, and as with Bosch, they are part mammal, part bird, part reptile, all with human-like characteristics and “though the concepts and artistic techniques in this painting are closely linked with surrealism, this work also owes much to the tradition of medieval . . . painting” (Walther 609).

In the background, the landscape appears to be a naturalistic stone structure. Closer inspection reveals a withering, naked figure being consumed by the smiling rock formation. The temptations of St. Anthony pictured here are temptations of the flesh that derive from nature, not from the spirit. This painting is a clear representation of the internal angst of the Saint.

In Dali’s version, the Saint is naked in a desert where he is confronted by a monstrously large horse and a team of elephants all on stilt-like legs. St. Anthony appears in the lower left corner holding a cross above his head, as if warding off the horse in the foreground and the elephants that follow. The horse is traditionally a symbol of strength, yet here it appears to be frightened by St. Anthony rearing up on two legs. Just as Bosch used recurrent symbols in his paintings, the elephants portrayed here with long, spindly, fragile legs are a recurring symbol in Dali’s works. But more importantly,

similar renditions of such legs can be seen in Bosch's rendition of the same painting (Figure 29).



Figure 29. Hieronymus Bosch. Detail left wing, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*, c. 1500, Grisaille on panel. Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon.

Contained within the painting are also images of sexuality that the saint must oppose. Nude figures have been used by Bosch and are used here by Dali to remind the viewer of the dangers of unbridled lust. Further back, another elephant carries a tall tower imbued with phallic overtones. In the clouds, a few fragments of the Escorial, a symbol of temporal and spiritual order, are visible. The dust storm in the background is perhaps indicative of the dangers yet to befall the Saint. The temptations in Dali's painting arrive in the form of a nightmarish parade. The temptations suffered here are symbolically spiritual as opposed to the physical temptations in Ernst's paintings.

What is so extraordinary in each of these paintings is that the imaginary creatures are painted with utter conviction, as though they truly existed. All three artists have invested each bizarre or outlandish creation with the same obvious realism as evident in the naturalistic animal and human elements. To the viewer, these nightmarish images

seem to possess an inexplicable surrealistic power, one that can be traced directly from the hands of Bosch to the mind of the surrealists.⁶

Direct evidence of Surrealism's similarity to Bosch is seen in an early ekphrastic work by Surrealist painter Joan Miró. *The Tilled Field* (1923-24) (Figure 30) contains several parallels to Bosch's *Garden*. And while Miro's painting is more of a direct ekphrastic interpretation, there is a definite uniqueness in style that is more of a Boschian flare as opposed to a direct copy in a different style or medium.



Figure 30. Miró, Joan. *The Tilled Field* (*La terre labourée*), 1923–24, oil on canvas, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York. Web.

Similar flocks of birds appear in the top left corner of Miró's painting, odd shaped creatures abound, eyes appear in the tree, and an oversized disembodied ear are all common elements in Bosch's work. On the right hand side of the painting, there is a dark line traversing the painting, as if to delineate a panel of a triptych. The images to the

right are darker and there is a stylized spider overshadowing the scene, perhaps Miró's version of death.

Early Surrealists' fascination with dreamscapes, the autonomy of the imagination, and the free-flowing connection to the unconscious brought about a renewed interest in Bosch. In 1936, a major exhibition of Bosch's work was on display in Rotterdam,⁷ and the Surrealists claimed to have "unearthed a 'medieval Surrealist' who "expressed his desires and dreams in bizarre modern symbols" (Meisler 1988).

Other more contemporary artists have also produced ekphrastic responses to Bosch's *Garden*. In a recent article published by ARTNews, seven contemporary artists were identified as being inspired by Bosch's *Garden*. Some of the works are postmodern interpretations of Bosch's works with symbols contained within referencing current pop culture. And while the medium used by these artists is very dissimilar to what Bosch used, the feeling overall is of one of a medieval to modern translation.

For example, Emily Erb's *Garden of Earthly Delights* (2009) (Figure 31) is a modern translation of the *Garden*. Compositionally, the work is a triptych with the

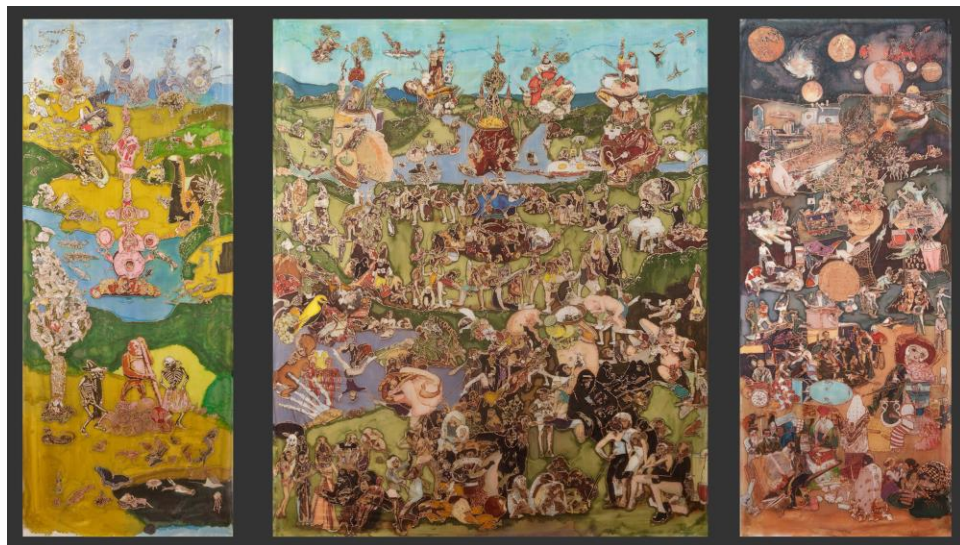


Figure 31. Erb, Emily. *Garden of Earthly Delights*, 2009, dye on silk. Web.

content references and the weirdness of Bosch, reflecting contemporary topics. The left panel of her triptych contains dinosaurs; where Jesus, Adam, and Eve once stood now stands an ape holding up a stick, in a pose reminiscent of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The ape is flanked by two Day of the Dead figures. The middle panel is teeming with people, but they are dressed. In the left hand corner, a monkey is wearing a suit with stockings and heels, while another monkey holds a human anatomy “doll.” Chimps fly through the air in the background, à la *Wizard of Oz*. The structures in the background are not made of geometrically constructed rock formations, but food. Coffee cups, eggs, sandwiches, pastries combine to create mountains. The panel on the right shows the edge of the world, leading to space. While in the foreground there are missiles, cigarette packs, a Mayan sundial, a space shuttle, skyscrapers, and cruise boats. This work “chronicles humanity’s evolution and decline, in a world where chimpanzees and baboons carouse with fetuses and football players; where pill bottle nestle in the palm of a severed hand; where books are set aflame while televisions and atomic bombs prevail. In Erb’s work hell is not fantasy; it is our reality” (Goldman). Bosch’s rendition of Hell was something similar for his day: burning buildings, sickly humans, and legions of warriors corralling people.

It is tempting to iconographically identify objects in Erb’s rendition of the *Garden*. Using social and cultural cues to analyze the individual signs presented, meaning can be derived, in the references to *2001* or the *Wizard of Oz*. While Bosch’s intent is not clear to us today, persons of Bosch’s day may very well have been able to iconographically relate to the details of the painting to popular ideals and cultural references of that time. However, as Panofsky cautioned against assigning meaning to

where none applies, there certainly appears to be a connection between the images and contemporary popular culture references.

Another one-to-one translation work is an interpretation in contemporary terms of Bosch's work is Carla Gannis' *The Garden of Emoji Delights* (2013) (Figure 32). She represents Bosch's hellscapes through an interpretation with emojis. In the far right panel, disturbing images in Bosch's *Garden* have been replaced by cute, harmless emojis. The symbols presented here are perhaps as prevalent and as easy to read now as those presented in by Bosch in his *Garden*.



Figure 32. Gannis, Carla. *The Garden of Emoji Delights*, 2013, archival digital pigment print. Web.

The left panel shows Jesus dressed in a red robe with a black turban, giving the peace sign, while Adam and Eve are clothed in modern day fashion. Present here, and absent in Bosch, is a snake in the Garden of Eden. The creatures in the forward pond are

similar, if not direct copies of those in Bosch's work, only with modern accouterment, such as headphones. Other creatures are eating frogs that appear to have jumped out of the popular video game *Frogger*. The pink structure in the pond in the right panel is similar to Bosch's, including the owl, but the objects surrounding it are postmodern references: TVs, computer screens, and stereo speakers. There is a nod to Hokusai's *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*.

The central panel places figures in similar patterns and locales as Bosch, while again referencing pop culture. Sabin Bors, curator for Gannis' exhibition, explains that the panel transforms her rendition into a "frisky setting where a world of digital creatures engage in sinful pleasures mimics what has become our communication through text and social media." The third panel, also structurally similar to Bosch's, shows musical instruments as tools of torture, a Treeman with the same ant-like creature devouring humans and crapping them out. While Gannis' treatment of Bosch is energetic and as captivating as Bosch's was in his day, there is a lack of interpretation as might be found in an ekphrastic creation.

Ali Banisadr's interpretation is more ekphrastically intuitive of the emotions created by the *Garden*. In *Motherhood* (2013) (Figure 33), there is a blur of activity, as if the parade in the middle panel of Bosch's *Garden*, is spinning out of control, blurring lines, shapes, and forms. Creatures with sharp teeth, fish that are belly-up, and a sinking boat all swirl in a multitude of color. All the while, there are hints of figures visible, such as the gesture of a man, dressed in orange with a blue turban sitting quietly amidst the chaos. Banisadr's work captures the essence of Bosch's emotion in the *Garden*. There is confusion as to meaning, but the Gaze draws the viewer in, over and over to try and



Figure 33. Banisadr, Ali . *Motherboard*, 2013, oil on linen. Web.

discern the meaning behind the objects presented. In the press release for his January 2014 solo exhibition at Sperone Westwater, Banisadr explains painting is a means to reflect visually on his thoughts, memories, and imagination. He sees in artistic creations as “encyclopedia worlds” where elements unite and are seen instantaneously. Were Bosch to be artistically active today, he might have produced such an image.

Raqib Shaw’s work, *The Garden of Earthly Delights X* (2004) (Figure 34), is also an ekphrastically-influenced work. His work, however, is an underwater rendition of a garden complete with hybrid-creatures. At first glance, the viewer is drawn in by the vibrant colors. Closer inspection however, shows erotic and bestial interactions between the creatures. While not directly representational of Bosch’s work, the oddity of the animals and the uncomfortable juxtapositions of the creatures culminate in a similar anxiety producing interaction with the work. In an artist interview by Amrita Jhaveri,



Figure 34. Shaw, Raqib. *The Garden of Earthly Delights X*, 2004, synthetic polymer paint, glitter, stones, crystals, rhinestones, and gems on board, three panels, Museum of Modern Art, New York, New York. Web.

Shaw confesses that his paintings are autobiographical. “Skulls, chains, and explosions of blood have replaced the hedonism of the early works.” Computer-generated images such as mosquitoes sucking blood, vultures eating carrion, or dead animals. A box of brightly colored crystals sits next to pictures of horror and terrors, a “telling juxtaposition. In Shaw’s mindscape, the beautiful and grotesque come together to create art of unique power.”

The Sum of all Evil (2012-13) (Figure 35), by Jake and Dinos Chapman, has a similar quality of anxiety producing feelings. It is on the Boschian trajectory, although not overtly related to Bosch. Depicted images of Ronald McDonald, Nike shoes, dismembered bodies, and skeletons on crosses are political statements and express current worries about war and destruction. These images are just as anxiety producing to today’s audiences as the visions of Hell were for Bosch’s. The Chapmans examine



Figure 35. Chapman, Jake and Dinos. Detail, *The Sum of All Evil: Hell*, 2012-13, fiberglass, plastic, and mixed media. Web.

historical and cultural stereotypes, using morbid humor to examine status quo, challenging collective fears.

More important than the various interpretations and personal responses to Bosch's work, is the long standing interest in his works. The fascination with Bosch's *Garden* is not because its form and style is still relevant today, but is due to the inner expression of the artist, which transcends time and has little to do with the symbols and icons of Bosch's day. It is because the art is full of what Kandinsky calls "pure artistry" that the painting speaks to today's viewers. The message may be subtler, but there is still a message, and unlike the viewers of the 1500s, today's viewers are able to judge it purely as an "expression of the eternal artistry."

Ultimately, the artist must have something to say, for mastery over form is not his goal but rather the adapting of form to its inner meaning. Siguença wrote that where most artists "paint man as he looks from outside, this artist has the courage to paint him as he is inwardly" (qtd. in Koerner 94). It is this inner depiction of his paintings that

holds appeal to artists. It takes courage to paint that which is on the inside, exposing emotions to viewers, making oneself vulnerable. The Chapmans, Shaw, and Bandisadr have all expressed their emotions and anxieties for others to view. What the viewer does with that information is up to them. As semiotics tells us, people don't always correctly interpret the message that is sent, which is certainly true in the case of Bosch.

Notes

¹Historically, handbooks of rhetoric were written for the understanding of ekphrasis, and rhetoricians suggested that an ekphrastic logo was one of the exercises that was part of a program of the *progymnasmata* training activity of a potential orator. Theon gives this definition: Ekphrasis is a descriptive speech that brings the thing shown vividly before the eye (Goldhill 3). The goal of these ekphrastic exercises was to become adept at making the audience become viewers. "Rhetorical theory knows well that its descriptive power is a technique of illusion, semblance, of making to appear" (ibid. 3).

²Botticelli's *Calumny of Apelles* (Uffizi, Florence) is one example.

³In linguistics, the linguistic sign carries sense and meaning on denotational and connotational levels (Barthes). The same is also true for the visual arts. Images are as fully expressive as natural language even though they are structured differently. Like texts, most paintings are composed of parts, though the parts are bits of lines, shapes, and colors arranged on a flat surface. When the various shapes in a picture wash, flow, and blend into each other and the background, they do not seem like individual words creating a narrative, but when signs combine to create a whole, these images are read as a narrative, giving the viewer a story, a story that is linked to a particular cultural context.

⁴Gibson reminds us that Bosch created the *Garden* during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, when the "Inquisition took on new life and men everywhere were peculiarly sensitive to questions of dogma and doctrine" (12).

⁵Also depicted by Bosch but only as a small incidental scene in some representations of Paradise (Oxfordartonline.com).

⁶Gibson states that the tendency to interpret Bosch's imagery in terms of modern Surrealism or Freudian psychology is anachronistic. "We too often forget that Bosch never read Freud and that modern psychoanalysis would have been incomprehensible to the medieval mind. What we choose to call the libido was denounced by the medieval Church as original sin; what we see as the expression of the subconscious mind was for the Middle Ages the promptings of God or the Devil . . . Bosch did not intend to evolve

the subconscious of the view but to teach him certain moral and spiritual truths and thus his images generally had a precise and premeditated significance . . . ” (12).

⁷Rotterdam, Museum Boymans, 1936, www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/22857.

CHAPTER VII

BRINGING EKPHRASTIC INTERPRETATION FULL CIRCLE

A true piece of ekphrastic art is not a direct copy of another's art nor is it a copy with just a different effect. Ekphrastic works are "stand-alone" works of art, but can be more fully understood and appreciated in light of the earlier work upon which they reflect.¹ In the works presented for this dissertation specific interpretations or translations of Bosch's *Garden* are made into ceramic sculptures. The ekphrastic sculptures do not draw attention to qualities that are immediately available in the painting, but embody qualities beyond the physical/visual aspects of the work. Successful ekphrastic responses will focus on one aspect of a work and amplify that into a unique work. The ekphrastic art presented here is not a direct copy of another's art nor is it a copy of the original with just a different effect. It is a response to signs within the painting and emotions created by interacting with all the panels.

The artistic process begins with Bosch's *Garden*. According to John Berger, in *Ways of Seeing*, we never look at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. The artist's way of seeing is reconstituted by the marks made on the canvas or the ceramic sculpture. And though every image embodies a way of seeing, personal perception of an image also depends upon what the viewer is seeing. The artwork created is a conversation between the painting and the artist, the artist and ekphrastic work, and the ekphrastic work and the viewer.

In creating an ekphrastic translation of the *Garden*, the artist focuses attention on isolated images or clusters of images in different panels as well as various markings and colorings. The experience is personal, meanings sometimes hidden, and the work of art creates an emotional response. The overall effect of the work is the creation of feelings and visions that are not adequately described through words. Indeed, the depth of the emotional connection to the work is often not adequately expressible through words. However, it is through the process of personal translation, or ekphrasis, these emotions or feelings are expressed through ceramic sculptures (Figures 36 and 37).



Figures 36 and 37. Ekphrastic response to Bosch's *Garden* (2016-17).

By examining the works presented here (Appendix 1), a feel for how the artist translated Bosch ekphrastically begins to shape the viewer's understanding of the work and the underlying emotion expressed by the artist. Focusing on the first piece of sculpture created through the ekphrastic expression, who can say why this particular bug

drew the artist's attention (Figure 38)? It is small and fairly concealed in the left hand panel of the painting (Figure 39). However, it fit in with the creation of anxiety in this



Figure 38. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, Creature crawling on rock, left panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.

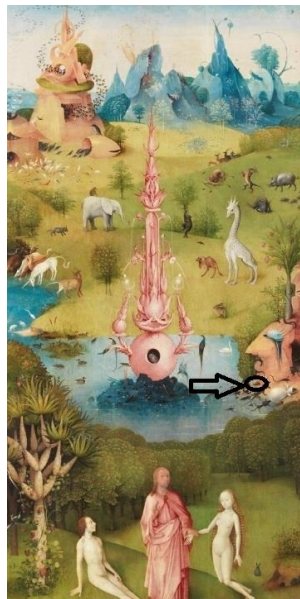


Figure 39. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, location of Creature crawling on rock, left panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.

viewer of the *Garden*. Creating a translation of the small bug into a larger, more active creature in the body of work shows the increased anxiety it causes in the artist (Figure 40). In fact, this tiny bug ends up playing a prominent role the exhibition. This piece is a translation of Bosch's work.



Figure 40. Ekphrastic translation of creature crawling on rock, 2015, clay and acrylic.

In creating the second half of this particular ekphrastic translation, a hybrid-platypus/fish from the pond in the left panel (Figure 41) of the *Garden* has been transformed into a three-dimensional being. The creatures are dragging him across the floor by the creatures while he is absorbed in photos of Bosch's works by others (Figure 42). By combining the interpreted creatures with the translated hybrid-platypus, the artist depicts the continued popularity, through time, of Bosch's *Garden*.

The creatures are pulling a direct representation of an actual creature from the painting, what the artist considers an ekphrastic interpretation. Metaphorically, they are also pulling the underlying anxiety that is created by viewing images in the *Garden*.



Figure 41. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, hybrid platypus in pond, left panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.



Figure 42. Detail, Ekphrastic translation of hybrid platypus, 2015, clay and acrylic.

Images that might seem mundane on the surface are in fact, underneath, not what they seem.

On a deeper level, the ekphrastic creatures pulling the hybrid platypus represent individual anxieties that combine to express the feelings created upon viewing the painting. Bosch used symbols specific to his day and time, signs that pointed to certain

ideas or thoughts that caused the viewer uneasiness, concern, worry, and anxiety. The artwork here presents an adaptation in clay of the feeling created from viewing the painting. In fact, Duchamp said that it is not possible to separate art and emotion. And emotions are tightly wrapped in the signs the artist sees in Bosch's works. How these signs and symbols are interpreted is a matter of semiotics.

As discussed in Chapter II, Moxey states that signs are being interpreted by means of other signs; our reception of signs is conditioned by the ways in which culture has taught people to recognize them. Then, in this manner, "[S]igns engender other signs *ad infinitum*" (*The Practice of Theory*, 33). Ultimately, the viewer or translator does not need to present a fixed interpretation, but rather the translator is only another player in the "endless process of semiotics" (Moxey "Semiotics and the Social History of Art" 998). This cyclical process is of particular interest to an artist as an endless source of inspiration and translation within the creative process.

An artist examines life by translating what is seen into what is felt, sometimes overtly expressive, and sometimes quietly creative. Artistically, the works presented have never concerned the artist with what Bosch was trying to say, as he is the holder of that key, but are curiosities of individual response, creations that artists and imitators have come up with through ekphrasis and semiotics.² The artist ekphrastically connects Bosch's *Garden* through these clay sculptures, re-envisioning the work and subsequently speaking to the viewer with a different voice.

To better understand the artistic work presented in clay, it helps to reflect on Bosch's creative process. While there is no written material available to understand when Bosch's art making process began, it is the author's contention that Bosch's

creative process becomes evident through surviving pen and ink sketches. The *Tree-Man* (c.1470) (Figures 43 and 44) sketch is perhaps a study for the final figure in the *Garden*. Given the date of the *Tree-Man* sketch and the date of the *Garden*, it is clear that Bosch had planned and thought about his works for an extended amount of time before executing, or completing the finished product. However, the Tree-Man in the ink drawing is much kinder and subtler than the one in the *Garden*.



Figure 43. Bosch, Hieronymus. *Tree-Man*, c.1470, pen and ink, Graphische Sammlung, Albertina, Vienna. Web.



Figure 44. Bosch, Hieronymus. *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Detail, Tree-Man, c. 1500, oil on oak panel, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.

Infrared reflectography of the *Adoration of the Magi* (c. 1475) shows that many of Bosch's major elements were underdrawn. This was done in thinned out liquid medium washes, and was most extensive in the drapery. Other parts of the painting had a few faintly underdrawn lines to suggest the landscape, including one line that showed the horizon slightly higher than was eventually painted, thus showing that while he had an initial plan, he made adjustments as he worked. Flesh tones were also underpainted in gray and then mixed with pale pink paint to create the color of flesh. For example, the older magi's head was underpainted with gray at a smaller scale and enlarged when painted with pale pink over tones, again attesting to the fact that Bosch made changes as he moved through the work (Figures 45 and 46).



Figures 45 and 46. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, *Adoration of the Magi*, c. 1475, oil and gold on oak, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York.

Working in clay is similar in process to Bosch, except that there is no trace evidence of where the additions or subtractions were made. It is only through photographs taken at various stages that show the progression of edits. Each piece of work starts in a similar manner, 25 pounds of clay for the bottom with another 25 pounds for the head. It takes time to get started, but once a piece is started, there is an internal drive that keeps the artist from thinking about much else until the groundwork for the piece has been completed. Then, taking a break for deliberations the artist works on forming, shaping, and changing the piece, moving step-by-step. This creative process is particularly suited for clay, as it allows the artist to work quickly, creating the base of a piece, then adding and subtracting clay until the outer image is a direct reflection of inner feelings. And, as a painter, the markings on the clay allow for a buildup of textures creating a sense of depth and volume.

The modality of clay allows for refining of the shape over time, working on the clay, creating the shape, allowing the emotion of the piece to develop while releasing the inner anxiety and emotion of the artist. The markings are made as if the clay artist is holding a brush, knocking, hitting, and shaping the work, while leaving marks that create shadows and textures. This technique is repeated with the application of colors. Some of

the ekphrastic pieces are in color and others are in gray scale. The works that are gray in color are representative of Bosch's creatures that are lurking in the shadows (Figures 47 and 48), waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting victim. The ones in color are



Figure 47. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, Hell panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak panel, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.



Figure 48. Ekphrastic response to Bosch's *Garden*, 2015, clay and acrylic.

representational of humans who are in various levels of stress and their long-standing interactions with anxiety. The exhibition is set up to have this kind of feeling created in the viewer.

Cristina Córdova, ceramic artist, states, “There’s something gratifying about finding something outside yourself, which allows access to something inside” (Schultz 52). This statement is certainly true about Bosch and the artist. Through Bosch’s works, the artist has been able to access anxiety in a manner that has not produced more anxiety, but has given way to a mode of expressing it.

Two of the sculptures presented are versions of the same woman, one young (Figure 49) and the other older (Figure 50). The young girl is new to anxiety, having



Figure 49. Young female figure, ekphrastic response to Bosch’s *Garden*, 2015, clay and acrylic.

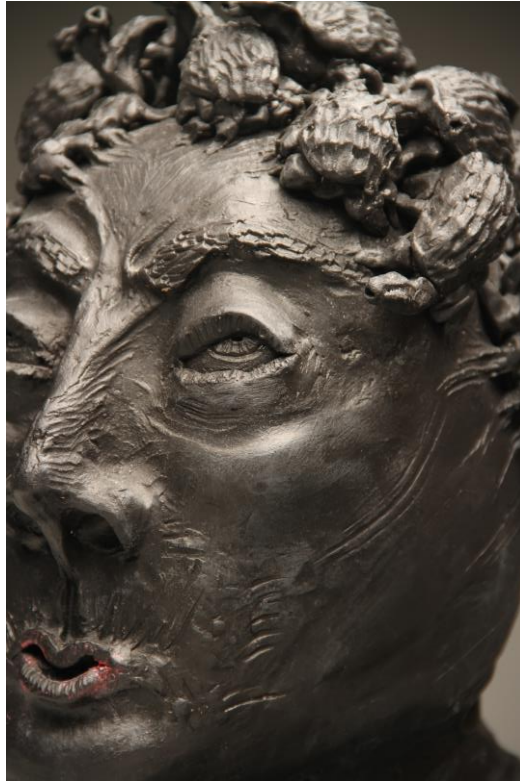


Figure 50. Older female figure with rock formation, ekphrastic translation of Bosch's *Garden*, 2016, clay and acrylic.

only a few of the creatures entering her head. Like the women in the center panel of the *Garden* (Figure 51), she senses that something is not quite right, but her youth and lack of



Figure 51. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, Center panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak panel, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.

experience do not afford her foresight to the future. She is unsure of how to address the foreboding and the building of anxiety within herself. The look on her face shows she is perhaps questioning what is going on, but her youth and inexperience tells her there is nothing to be concerned about, despite the creatures crawling into her head.

The older woman has been through a multitude of years and life experiences. The creatures are consuming her and her brain. She is sinking into the mire, weighted down by the sheer weight of the anxieties she has experienced through her life. Both women are oblivious to world around them, and only conscious of their inner thoughts and ruminations that are aroused by the exterior anxieties. The pain is internal, yet the expression is accessible to outside viewers despite their desire to hide their emotions.

In the process of creating sculptures, the sculpting, the application of color, the creation of the stands on which they are exhibited, there is no anxiety. It is as if the pieces are sucking that emotion out. Once the creative process stops, the anxiety returns full-force. Perhaps Bosch was working out his own inner demons with his representations of Hell. It would go far to explain the intense and intricate details.

Bosch's work contains both formal and conceptual elements. The architectural structures, while "built" of formal structures, such as a bird, fruit, and naked people, are more conceptual, as they seem to be structurally unsound. One sphere is balanced on a plate, balanced on a sphere with protrusions jutting off in various directions. There is a semblance of formalism, but how things are put together and arranged is very conceptual.

The combination of human and animal forms, reminiscent of the marginalia of his day, is captured in the ekphrastic works of the human birds, towering over the tortured humans. The larger size of the bird-man sculpture (Figure 52) along with the placement



Figure 52. Bird-man, ekphrastic translation of Bosch's *Garden*, 2016, clay and acrylic.

in the exhibition over the other two male figures adds to the tension and anxiety produced, not only in the viewer, but also in the men over whom the bird creature is towering. The trio of heads represents the odd juxtapositions found in Bosch's work.

In Bosch's work, in the center panel, there is a level of color that leads the viewer to a level of interaction that is superficial and precursory. Yet, upon further examination, the color used directs the viewer to the subtitle oddities and grasp the viewer's Gaze in an uncomfortable manner. Deeper inspection of the painting shows humans painted in gray-scale and lead the viewer to ponder whether the human is within or outside this world.

In the pieces translated from the *Garden*, the creatures in gray-scale represent the emotions in the *Garden* that are not readily accessible to viewers. However, the three people being fed by an overly large bird are being shied away from as the man looks cautiously over his shoulder, as if anxiety could be contagious (Figure 53). These types of depictions, which can be found throughout the painting, represent to the artist the crux



Figure 53. Bosch, Hieronymus. Detail, blue-gray man in pond, center panel, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, c. 1500, oil on oak, Museo Nacional Del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Web.

of the anxiety created by Bosch when viewing the *Garden* with Twenty-First Century eyes. Anxiety is dark, and lonely, and frightening, yet vaguely familiar.

Each era produces art of its own which can never be repeated. Kandinsky states that efforts to revive the art-principles of the past will at best produce an art that is stillborn, and in fact, it is impossible for current generations to live and feel as those in the past. Accordingly, there is an inner need in the artist's art making process that is built of three mystical elements: something that calls for expression, an element of style particular to that artist and his era, and an element of pure artistry. Kandinsky refers to the element of pure artistry as the one that is constant. He states that the close relationship of art throughout the ages is not in a relationship with outward form, but in inner meaning.

There is, however, a kind of external similarity in art. "When there is a similarity of inner tendency in the whole moral and spiritual atmosphere, a similarity of ideals, at first closely pursued but later lost to sight, a similarity in the inner feeling of any one

period to that of another, the logical result will be a revival of the external forms which served to express these inner feelings of an earlier age” (Kandinsky 1). This implies that Bosch was not concerned with his patrons’ worries or needs, but produced the art he felt was necessary given the task, time, and artistic constraints of the period.

Most importantly, is the long standing interest in Bosch’s works. The fascination with Bosch’s *Garden* is not because its form and style is still relevant today, but is due to the inner expression of the artist, which transcends time and has little to do with the symbols and icons of Bosch’s day. It is because the art is full of what Kandinsky calls the “pure artistry” that the painting speaks to today’s viewers. The message may be subtler, but there is still a message, and unlike the viewers of the 1500s, today’s viewers are able to judge it purely as an “expression of the eternal artistry.”

Notes

¹For example, when Ravel composed his piano cycle *Gaspard de la nuit*, not only did he choose the titles of three of Bertrand's poems for his three pieces, but “actually reprinted each poem on the page facing the beginning of the musical piece that refers to it” (Bruhn). While Ravel's music can be considered “stand-alone” when appreciated without knowledge of the poems, the listeners' insight into the depth of the musical message increases dramatically once the music is comprehended in light of the poem.

²Refer to Chapter V for further discussion.

CODA

“What we see depends mainly on what we look for. . . . Though we may all look at the same things, it does not all follow that we should see them.”

–Sir John Lubbock (1834-1913)

Planning a large-scale exhibition requires a number of coordinated steps. In the earliest stages, while I had a sense of the overall vision for my exhibition, I had questions. How will I achieve the mood I am trying to create? How will my creations interact with my dissertation’s theoretical constructs? How many pieces will I need to create this emotional response? How will the viewer move through the exhibition to achieve the intended response? Additionally, lighting plays a vital role, as do the pedestals and floor pieces. For this exhibition, I am artist and curator in one.

I was intent on creating a mood, one of unease and anxiety in the viewer. And, the ceramic sculptures created for this exhibition need to interact with one another to create a cohesive whole.

My initial exploration of an ekphrastic response came from a core course for the PhD program. While others in the class reacted to works of art through poetry or short stories, I felt that words could not adequately capture the emotions that the *Garden* stirred in me, so I chose the road with which I am most comfortable—ceramic sculpture.

As I ekphrastically created sculptures, I found that using the language of art to express what artists know is to be reminded that written language can be limiting. Sometimes words only serve to express less than the desired idea or sometimes more than intended. But if the work of art has the right amount of ambiguity, as is with the meaning of the *Garden*, then ideas different than those intended can be communicated. It is under these circumstances that viewers can question their own premises and art becomes a process of inquiry.

Through research for the dissertation that accompanied this exhibition, I determined that artistically I would assign three levels of an ekphrastic response to my creations: translation, interpretation, and an overall capturing of the mood of the inspirational work of art. A translation is where the sculpture looks plucked from the painting, translated into a three-dimensional representation and placed in the exhibit. The hybrid-platypus (Figure 54) is a direct translation from the *Garden* (Figure 41). An interpretation is where I draw inspiration from Bosch, and take the sculpture to the next level, as represented by the creatures pulling the hybrid-platypus (Figure 55). The third level captures the overall mood of the *Garden* and evokes an emotional response.



Figure 54. Hybrid-Platypus on gallery floor, ceramic and acrylic, 2015.

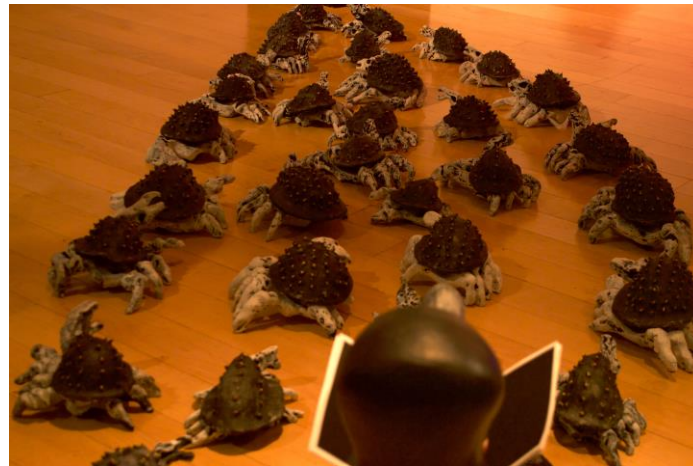


Figure 55. Interpreted Creatures pull the Hybrid Platypus across the gallery floor, ceramic and acrylic, 2015.

As this exhibition is a personal, ekphrastic response to the Bosch's *Garden*, there are direct correlations to his work, but the pieces also function as standalone works of art. Inspired by this painting, I explore Bosch's ambiguity of meaning and my intense emotional response. For the exhibition as a whole, the elements in the painting that I

wanted to highlight are the intensive activity, the interplay between pieces, and the feeling of anxiety, similar to that which the painting of the *Garden* stirred in me.

One of my goals was to have the viewer feel uneasy when entering the gallery, not a feeling of fear, just one of unease and discomfort. As the viewer enters the exhibition, the translucent curtain to the left blurs the figures in the main area and creates a corridor with two creatures highlighted at the end (Figure 56). This arrangement creates a sense of mystery as to what lies beyond.



Figure 56. Two creatures at end of corridor act as a lure for the Gaze, ceramic and acrylic, 2017.

These creatures interact with themselves and the viewer; the rear creature draws the viewer into the exhibition acting as the Lacanian Gaze. As a nod to Bosch, they are reminiscent of the man looking out of the cave (Figure 4). The shadow cast on the wall by the lighting adds to the tension; the shadow of bill of the rear creature points into the exhibition.

The curtain along the entryway serves two purposes: to shield the viewer from directly interacting with the exhibition when entering the gallery; and, more symbolically, to serve as a reminder that the meaning in Bosch's work is not directly accessible to the viewer. When the gallery is empty of visitors, the pieces take on a quality of vagueness when viewed through the curtain. There are shapes, but the details are not readily accessible. Visitors commented that the curtain also increased their sense of uneasiness while in the exhibit as they could hear people coming into the gallery, but could not see who they were until they turned the corner.

As viewers enter the main exhibition, there is a small gap and then the viewers are welcomed by an owl-like creature (Figure 57). Three creatures that sit on a large, tall pedestal to the left create a pathway into the exhibition. The birdman is on a raised dais, which elevates him above the other two figures (Figure 58). Additionally, he towers over most viewers as they walk along the pathway increasing a sense of unease. These sculptures are muted in color, with the bird-man in gray scale. The intent is to compliment the colors used by Bosch and enhance the emotion of the trio with subdued



Figure 57. Owl-like creature, ceramic and acrylic, 2016.



Figure 58. Trio of heads creating pathway, ceramic and acrylic, 2015-16.

color and limited lighting. The shadow of the bird-man interacts with the bust of the man in the corner (Figure 59) adding an additional layer of interaction between the figures.

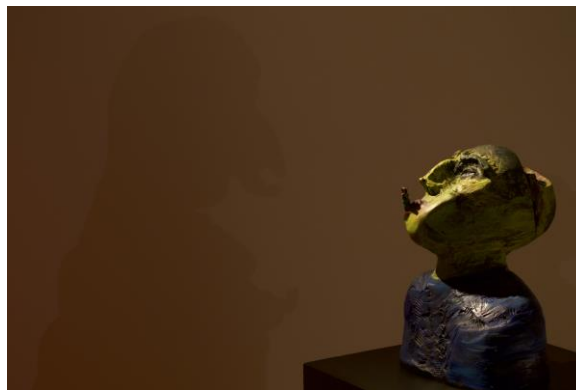


Figure 59. Bird-man's shadow with lure #2, ceramic and acrylic, 2015.

This man is highlighted by the use of intensive color with a spotlight strategically placed to draw the viewer down the path. This single man on the pedestal acts as a second lure, and anchors the corner. However, this lure did not work as well as I had

hoped as many people turned left directly into the gallery, drawn in by the activity on the floor.

Not readily visible from a distance, the intended lure has the back half of his head open with smaller creatures inside (Figure 60). He also has a creature trying to escape from his mouth. The combination of lighting and creatures is intended to begin the questioning process in the viewer. Behind him, crowded into the corner, small, unlit creatures (Figure 61) climb and crawl over one another, adding to the feeling of anxiety.



Figure 60. Inside Lure #2's head, ceramic and acrylic, 2015.

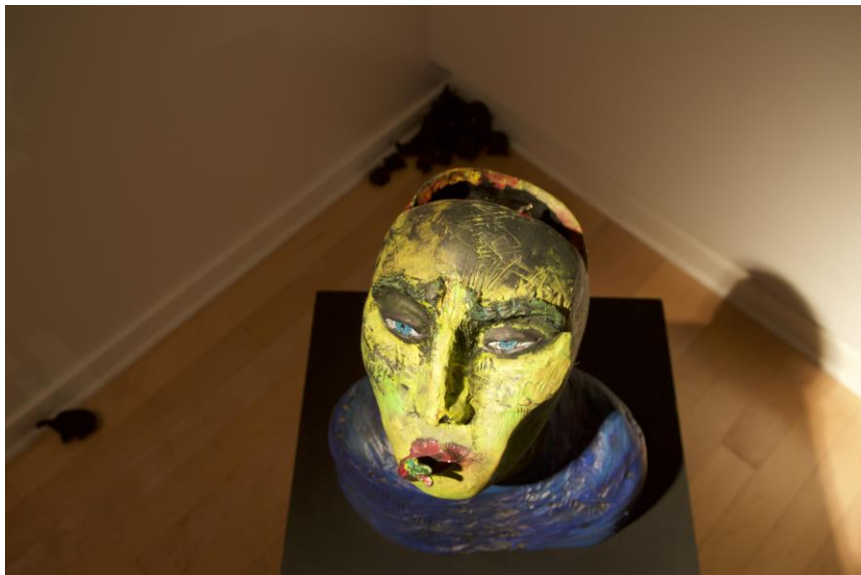


Figure 61. Creatures in corner, ceramic and acrylic, 2015-2017.

Turning to the left, the viewer sees an older lady sitting within a large volcanic mire of stones and creatures (Figure 62). She is lit with blue and red lights from within, while a red spotlight over her head extends her presence to the wall behind her actual structure. She is absorbed in the inner pain she is feeling as she melts into the floor of the gallery. To her immediate left is a younger version of herself on a pedestal (Figure 63). The younger version is related to the older through the lava stone and the color of the lips, as well as the creatures climbing on them. The connection is subtle, but visible.

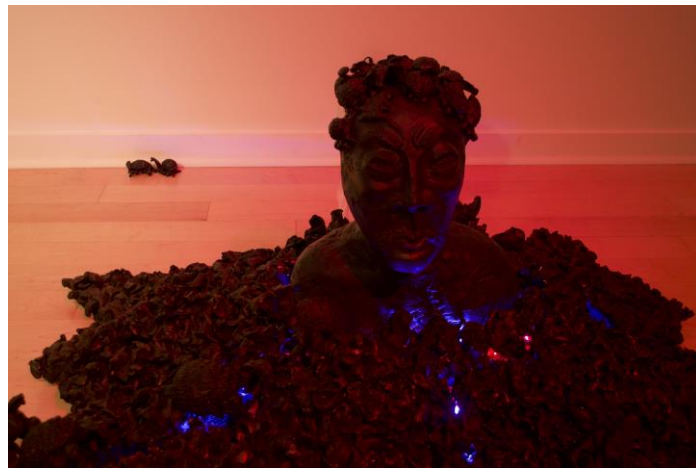


Figure 62. Old lady with lava rocks and creatures, 2016-17.

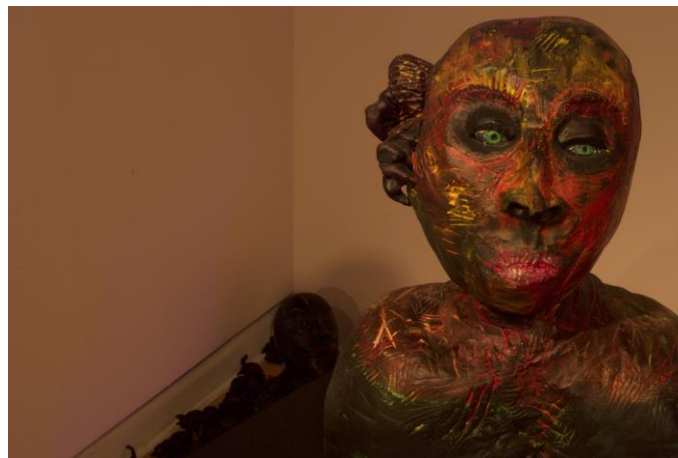


Figure 63. Young lady with creatures, ceramic and acrylic, 2015.

Behind the younger version of the woman is a man on the floor (Figure 64) covered with creatures. He is not visible until the viewer enters the gallery and actually steps into the main room. Catching the viewer's eye, he causes a sense of unease.

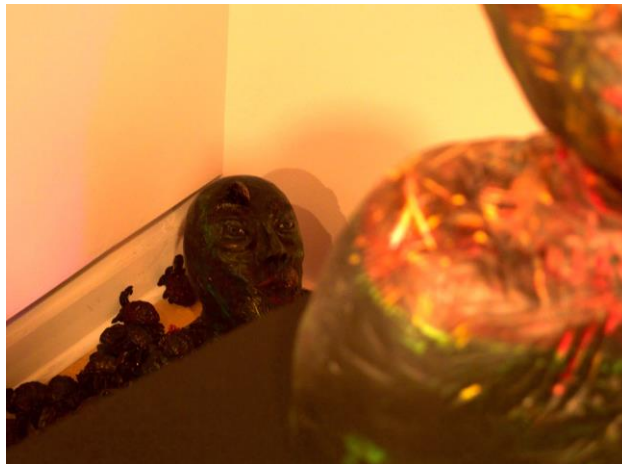


Figure 64. Man on floor being devoured by creatures, 2015-16.

Continuing around the outer perimeter of the gallery, the viewer encounters three sculptures on a pedestal, all at different levels of obliteration and at varying points of psychological disintegration (Figures 65 and 66). Painted in gray scale, they are a direct connection to the gray figures in Bosch's paintings (Figure 53) that cause anxiety in the artist. These figures draw the viewer in with their intricate details. The red spotlight ties them with the older woman, forming a connection to their combined psychological distress. For me, the gray scale creatures in the painting are the ones in the most pain.

Throughout the room, small creatures are climbing over one another and crawling along the edges of the wall. This activity represents the movement in the painting and the interaction between panels. Bosch uses ravens to move the eye from one panel to the next; I use creatures to move the viewer from one sculpture to the next.

Artistically, I apply the constructs of semiotics and the Gaze to create to my ekphrastic response in clay. Ekphrasis puts theory into practice and magnifies elements in the *Garden*. Each piece serves a purpose in the overall exhibition and they interact with each other to create additional layers of meaning. Therefore, this installation as a whole forms my ekphrastic response.

Based on the responses from many of the gallery goers, this exhibition was successful in creating feelings of unease, anxiety, and uncertainty. One viewer had a strong reaction to the anchor piece (Lure #2), stating that he appeared tortured and needed an embrace to smooth his woes. Another viewer created a detailed narrative concerning the three gray-scale creatures in the far end of the exhibition (Figures 65 and 66). The viewer stated that: the one with no face had seen something visually disturbing that had caused the face to melt away; the one with the “duck” bill had said something to cause discomfort in others and therefore his face had become distorted; and, the final creature in the trio had no ears, since the words others had spoken were so unsettling that he had ripped them off in an attempt to quite the voices in his head. And while the intent of the artist was not as severe as the one created in this viewer, the viewer’s semiotic response included feelings of unease and deep emotional upheaval.



Figure 65. Trio of heads, head #1, 2016-17



Figure 66. Trio of heads, head #2, 2016-17

While the varied interpretations of my work differ from my personal narrative, the intent of the emotion was present in many who viewed the exhibition. Semiotic theory allows the viewer to replace a static model of interpretation of the work of art with an active one. The work is no longer a repository of the values and emotions invested in it during its creation, but becomes one that is personal and

interactive for each viewer. In fact, Bal argues a semiotic view of art entails a secondary place attributed to the artist, in favor of the interaction between the image and viewer. Through this exhibition I was able to use my creations to draw the viewer in, evoke emotion, and create a link between Bosch's *Garden* and my work.

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APPENDIX

Figures presented in Exhibition: These sculptures are unnamed as the artist did not want to influence the viewer.













CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME: Virginia Sinai Hosono

ADDRESS: 154 N. Galt Ave
Louisville, KY 40206

DOB: October 6, 1958

EDUCATION & TRAINING

B.A. with concentration in Ceramics, December 1987
M.A.T. in Art, K-12 certification, May 1996
Rank I in Special Education, Moderate to Severe, 2008
Ph.D. in Humanities, candidate, 2016
University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

Language and culture exchange certificate, May 1986
Kansai Gaidai University, Hirakata Japan

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

Adjunct Instructor, Fall 2009-Spring 2011

Taught ML 313, Special Topics:

Doing Business in Japan

Japanese Pop Culture

Taught JAPN 101-102, Beginning Japanese

Adjunct Instructor, Spring 1995

Taught ML 313, Special Topics:

Doing Business in Japan

Program Director, Summer 1993 and 1994

Prepared Japanese students from Hiroshima Shudo University for
TOEFL exam

Coordinated field trips, implemented cross-cultural curriculum,
taught TOEFL based grammar and vocabulary.

Taught American Culture Class

Part-time instructor, U of L/ General Electric, 1993-1994
Taught GE employees Japanese language and business culture

Developed and implemented curriculum for classes

Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY

Full-time Teacher, 9/1996-5/2001
Taught art class for 9-12 graders and ECE students

Taught Japanese language and culture classes for 9-12 grade students

Instructed students on core curriculum as established by JCPS schools, focusing on humanities and art history

Team-taught *Pit-fired Pots*, an art class that combined art, history and chemistry

Created and taught a school-wide refresher course for juniors to prepare for CATS testing in Arts and Humanities

Created and developed a peer mentoring program that integrated regular program students and students from the ECE department

Implemented and developed Japanese language immersion days at local elementary schools

Served as JCTC union representative for Jeffersontown High School

Part-time Teacher, 1992-1995
Taught Japanese language and culture to 9-12 grade students

Developed and implemented curriculum for Japanese language and culture class

Coordinated field trips to local elementary school for Japanese immersion days

Taught Japanese language and culture Continuing Education classes

Private Tutor

Japanese language and culture class, 1991-1995

Taught language and culture to local high school students and management level business employees one-on-one

Nichibei Eigo Gakkuin , Tennoji, Japan

Program coordinator, Head Teacher, 1986-1990

Developed curriculum for school aged children

Prepared high school/college students for TOFEL exam

Liaison for Japanese and English speaking staff

Develop curriculum and taught classes for all aged students

PROFESSIONAL
EXPERIENCE:

International Center

Office of Study Abroad and International Travel

University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

Director, 2016

Provide overall leadership for and management of the University of Louisville's study abroad office and its services.

Serve as the advocate for study abroad on campus and in the community.

Lead the office and the university in strategic planning and policy development for education abroad

Lead program development and evaluation

Oversee crisis and risk management

Oversee financial/ budget management for the office

Direct and oversee cross-campus collaboration with faculty, administration, academic units on initiatives and best practices for study abroad and international travel.

Associate Director, 2015

Direct, coordinate, and oversee all aspects of study abroad programs

Direct, manage, coordinate and oversee all aspects of faculty, staff, graduate, and group international travel

Direct and oversee student recruitment through the marketing of study abroad and exchange programs

Serve as campus-wide liaison to ensure consistent procedural application across units

Direct and manage the operations and strategic growth of the Office of Study Abroad and International Travel

Assistant Director, 2010

Manage, coordinate, and oversee all aspects of study abroad programs

Monitor the efficacy of policies and procedures established in conjunction with other units

Work with the Associate Director to implement student exchanges

Oversee the marketing of programs

Maintain frequent contact with students studying and planning to study abroad

Plan, implement, and coordinate study abroad fairs

Work with Associate Director to determine annual goals for the office

Attend meetings as required

Supervise study abroad advisors, international travel staff, graduate, and work study students

Develop, monitor, and implement budget for the office

Study Abroad Advisor, 2008

Inform and assist students with study abroad procedures and requirements

Coordinate with program assistant senior to maintain the study abroad and international travel database and files

Develop marketing strategies for programs, strategies for increasing interest in study abroad

Develop marketing materials

Coordinate with Registrar and Financial Aid offices to ensure students studying abroad are compliant with university policies

Maintain contact with students abroad

Coordinate summer work exchange with France

Hold informational session on study abroad

Serve as certifying agent for study abroad applications

Coordinate with Associate Director on pre-departure orientations

Prepare transfer credit upon completion of study abroad

Study Abroad Graduate Assistant, 2005-2008

Assist students in deciding and planning for educational experiences abroad

Create, design and distribute information concerning opportunities for study abroad using Microsoft Publisher and Word

Organize and facilitate the fall and spring Study Abroad Fair
Organize and collect data for Open Doors reporting using Excel
spreadsheets and Access database.
Create PowerPoint presentations highlighting year-long exchange
programs and present to targeted classrooms
Supervise work-study students
Recruit students for the Kansai Gaidai Japan year-long exchange

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

NAFSA National Convention. Poster Session: *Increasing Diversity Outreach for Study Abroad: LGBT Student Programming Abroad*, 2015.

NAFSA National Convention. Poster Session: *Pre-departure Flipbook: Meeting Students Where They Are*, 2015.

NAFSA Regional Convention. Session Lead: *Increasing Diversity Outreach for Study Abroad: LGBT Student Programming Abroad*, 2013.

Round table discussion i2a Summer Institute: *Non-credit Study Abroad Assessment*, 2012.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Co-Chair Provost Office Diversity Committee, 2014-
Served on SACS Accreditation committees, 2014-
Coordinated Cleary/Title IX training for KCEA (Kentucky Council on Education Abroad)
Coordinated and co-led LGBT trip to Greece, 2013
Co-Author of 21st Century International Subcommittee Plan, 2013
Co-Author of Strategic Plan for the International Center, 2012
i2a Summer Institute planning committee, 2012-2013
Co-Chair Campus Climate Committee, 2012
Co-Author of Study Abroad Crisis Management Protocol, 2011
Co-Author of Travel Warning Policy, 2009

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS:

KIIS (Kentucky Institute for International Studies) Board Member, 2013-
CCSA (Cooperative Center for Study Abroad) Board Member, 2013-
NAFSA, Member, 2009-
Forum on Education Abroad, Member 2009-
CIS, Advisory Board Member, 2014-

TEACHING

INTERESTS:

Ceramics

15th Century Northern Renaissance

Art Education

Japanese Pop Culture

Japanese Business

Japanese Language

K-12 Arts and Humanities

K-12 ECE